

# The Circles

## Forgiveness

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CONTENTS

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### Theme Articles

Deciding to Forgive .....	2
Through the Eyes of Love .....	3
Experiencing Forgiveness .....	4
The Freedom of Forgiveness .....	6
The Divine Love of Forgiveness .....	7
Study Notes .....	8
How Do I Forgive—a poem .....	5

### Regular Features

About Angels .....	12
Lighten Up .....	10
Parenting .....	14
Things to Share .....	19







By Kaye Cooper  
Houston, Texas

## Deciding to Forgive

Most people probably never think of forgiving as involving several steps. They jump right to the forgiving, struggling to force their wills into line with what they believe is the right thing to do. And when they continue to feel the same way about the offender, they conclude that forgiveness is difficult.

Forgiveness is difficult—and complex. It involves several possible steps. In my experience the hardest step is *deciding that you are ready to forgive*.

Deciding that you are ready to forgive runs into two major roadblocks. The more perplexing of the two is the failure to recognize one's own lack of forgiveness.

### HIDDEN UNFORGIVENESS

There are many times when people do not recognize that they are unforgiving. Have you ever said to yourself, "I'll rise above this situation and forgive him." Nothing is ever said about the event which, in your perception, needed forgiveness. No solutions are found. You treat the person with courtesy and even friendliness. On the surface all seems calm, yet you find yourself going back over the event—living it over and over in your mind. Your emotions are aroused each time, and you must fight your way back to calm and poise repeatedly. A friend of mine calls this "running the tapes." It is as if you have a VCR in your mind on which you continue to replay the upsetting events again and again. There is no release of the situation within you. Refraining from retaliation is not equal to forgiveness.

Forgiving involves releasing the hurt, anger, and disappointment.

My friend who coined the phrase "running the tapes" was not satisfied with suffering the emotional upheavals of replaying the event repeatedly. She became convinced that she needed to investigate forgiveness further. And she eventually did achieve a genuine forgiveness which rid her of the tapes and brought a great deal of joy into her life.

Another way one can experience hidden unforgiveness is the "Novocaine" method. You "forgive" the person, but you find that your feelings about her or him change. You have cut him out of your emotional life. You do not dislike him—you simply do not feel anything for him. You no longer care about him as a person. You do not desire good for him as a child of God. You have administered a shot of Novocaine to alleviate the pain your unforgiveness causes you, and anesthetized your loving, God-like feelings for that person as well. Forgiving involves seeing the person as the child he is—one who makes mistakes because he is young. Forgiving involves wanting to do good to him, even though he may still behave in ways you dislike.

Disguising unforgiveness with Novocaine is very common with events in your distant past. When you do not know how to go about forgiving, you deal with it in the best way you can to relieve your pain. Unfortunately, the failure to forgive is still there separating you from the attitudes and actions God encourages you to take.

Another symptom of hidden unforgiveness is "mud-colored glasses." When a person has betrayed you or failed you in some way, you may find yourself looking at him or her with "mud-colored glasses." You look at all his actions in the worst light. You expect him to have bad motives. You anticipate bad behavior. You are cynical toward him. You may rarely think of the betrayal, and if you were asked if you had forgiven him for it, you might say, "Yes." But the memory of his failure has colored your perceptions of him and everything he does.

You might say, "But I should not forget what he did and blindly put myself in a position to be betrayed again." That may be true, but mud-colored glasses is more than that. It assumes that betrayal is an inherent weakness of the person and watches diligently for the slightest sign of the next betrayal. Forgiving, in contrast, involves seeing the person as God sees him; Acknowledging weaknesses but viewing them as temporary; penetrating the temporary immaturities of time, seeing the real potential of the person—and loving him.

I am reminded of one of my favorite sayings: "A friend is someone who, when we have made fools of ourselves, doesn't think it's permanent." Most people are growing and changing for the better. It is probably just a matter of time before that person who betrayed you grows beyond the weakness that caused the problem. To really forgive a person

See *DECIDING* on page 12.



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# Through the Eyes of Love



By Sharon Lanier  
Austin, Texas

Forgiveness is a topic that we read about and hear about frequently, but is little understood. It is one of the hardest things we can do, yet it yields the most growth producing results.

Many of us are so used to holding grudges, hurt and anger deep inside. A little time goes by, the memories and emotions fade and we think we are OK. Until...someone says something and Ugh! up come the old hurts and angers once again. We know that some day we will have to deal with them—but how? How do we forgive? How can we even forgive, much less love that person again?

There are steps we can take in the forgiveness process which will insure peace of mind and a loving spirit toward our brothers and sisters. All we have to do is make the decision that with God's help and strength we can do it.

To prepare yourself for forgiveness, take some time to talk to God and tell him what you are going to do. Ask him to help you, to give you strength and guidance. Remember, you and God as partners are doing this. Then, spend some time in quiet receptivity.

## RE-EXAMINING

First in the process is to re-examine the situation. Go off by yourself where you have total peace and quiet. It may take you several such times to totally work through the situation. This depends on the complexity and your desire to let it go and totally surrender it to God.

You may find that writing your thoughts down as you go is good for

you. Or you may simply do it by talking to God in the quiet or even aloud.

Do you still have anger or thoughts of hurt and revenge about the situation? Is fear involved? Looking at these emotions in a hopefully non-judgmental way helps you to get a base from which to work. I frequently use a journal, so at this point I write out my fears, frustrations and angers. All the while I am talking to God and sharing my human feelings with him. I know he understands. I simply look at the situation, knowing I am human and acknowledging that I do have emotions—fears, angers, resentments, etc.

## RELEASING

The second important step in the process of forgiveness is the willingness and commitment to see your situation differently. You want to "want" to forgive. Take the time to talk to God. Ask him to help you have the desire to forgive this person. Ask him to help you love, to let go of the hurt and anger. At this point, you may still have strong emotions. That is OK! As you continue working through this step, continue to ask and have faith that God will help you become willing to let go of those emotions. Allow plenty of time for quiet reflection, allowing God to soothe you and comfort you. What you are doing is lining yourself up to do God's will. This may take a short time or it may take several weeks. Don't worry. As you continue to pray for the true desire to forgive and let go, it will eventually come. It is also very important to pray for your ene-

mies (those you seek to forgive). Daily prayer for them will prepare you faster.

## SEEING WITH GOD'S EYES: A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

When you know that you do not want to be angry anymore, you are ready to move on. This step I call "Seeing with God's Eyes." You ask the Father to help you see the person and the situation with a larger perspective. You examine the situation much as a very loving, non-judgmental friend might do. You imagine how God would see it. You see the person as he really is—with all his human strengths and weaknesses. As insights and different understandings come to you, you may want to jot them down or even write everything out.

You are asking to see the situation and the events through different eyes, through the eyes of love.

See EYES on page 16.

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*All page references to The Urantia Book are as follows: The page number is first, followed by a colon and then the paragraph number. Each indentation on a page is counted as a paragraph, even if it is a single line long, as in numbered lists. Paragraph 0 on the page is the one which began on the previous page. The international citation which follows the slash refers to paper, section, and paragraph within the section.*

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By Carol Weatherford  
Houston, Texas

# Experiencing Forgiveness

One evening as I was randomly reading *The Urantia Book*, I happened upon the Believer's Prayer. As I read, I came to the phrase, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This phrase jumped out at me as if it had been printed in bold type.

For the first time I really *understood* what this phrase was saying. In that simple sentence we are asking God for forgiveness, acknowledging without excuses our "indebtedness" to him and committing ourselves to granting unconditional forgiveness to others, releasing all of those in "debt" to us.

*Are we really willing to say that?  
Could we do it if we wanted to?*

The impact of that statement set my mind racing. Forgiveness just might be the supporting brace in all relationships where loving and being loved is an issue. The failure to give or receive forgiveness probably accounts for the failure of marriages, families and friendships.

To forgive is to renounce anger or resentment and to actually wish the best for the person who has hurt us. Jesus emphasized this when he told Peter to forgive seventy times seven times. By then forgiveness would be a habit. Jesus also modeled it when he prayed on the cross for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

If forgiveness is so important, how had it affected my life? As I thought about it, I realized forgiveness had become significant to me in several ways.

## TEACHING FORGIVENESS

First, my husband and I tried to teach forgiveness to our daughter. We taught the importance of being kind and compassionate to others and we tried to set an example in the family unit for her to follow. Because she has no brothers or sisters, most of her trials came from her peers. When she was offended by one of her friends, we would talk about it and try to help her understand why her friend had behaved in a hurtful way. By learning to understand her friends, it was easier for her to forgive them.

## RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

Another way I learned about forgiveness was when I desperately needed it. I had horribly offended those whom I loved the most. They had every right to turn their backs on me and hold me hostage to anger and vindictiveness. The upper hand was theirs to use.

I had to look my loved ones straight in the eye and say, "I'm sorry. I know I have hurt you, and you have a right to be angry. Can you forgive me?"

Their forgiveness came to me clothed in mercy and kindness. It was not given without serious thought on their part, nor was the offense a simple matter instantly forgotten. While their forgiveness was granted in full, it had to be reaffirmed over and over as occasional stabs of pain arose from the heart of the forgiver. That dark experience showed me how great the price paid in the act of forgiving can be. Forgiveness is not cheap.

## GIVING FORGIVENESS

The third way I have learned about forgiveness is by giving it. When I was young, I hated my stepfather. When arguments between him and my mother would awaken me during the night, I would silently wish for bad things to happen to him so he could not come home. Even after my mother divorced him, I would allow myself to dwell on how I could gain vengeance against him for the inexcusable offenses he had done against my family. I felt justified in my anger and was unwilling to release it. I carried this hate with me into my adult life. Over time my feelings for my stepfather changed from hate to indifference. It did not matter to me if he was sick or well, alive or dead. He was just a bad, unforgivable incident in my past.

An unforgiving spirit is a terrible thing. Its channel to God has been clogged with bitterness and conspiracy, and it is often troubled and unhappy. Curiously, it is the unforgiving spirit that suffers. The unforgiven person is often blissfully unaware that he or she is the cause of so much trouble in the heart of the other.

Then one day as I was preparing a program on forgiveness, I came to the end of my rope. I was trying to put together something that would be helpful and meaningful to others. I never got very far. It was as if my mind was bound. In my frustration I realized that I had some forgiveness of my own that I had to deal with. I had to forgive my stepfather and release my feelings of indifference and all the old anger. I was surprised to



## How Do I Forgive...

Deep searing  
heart pain  
Only those you loved  
those you trusted  
can hurt like this

Father, I know,  
I have faith that  
someday I will  
thank you for  
this PAIN  
Today I only have faith.

Today, now, through  
this wall of tears  
comes that whisper  
from within  
Your Voice wrapped  
in your comforting arms

**As I love you, imperfect  
being, you must love  
those who hurt you.**

What!?!  
How can I love those  
who burn my heart?  
I want to hurt them  
Well, sort of. Part of me  
wants to hit back  
to get revenge

**My dear child  
There  
Feel my love  
Know my forgiveness for your shortcomings  
Now go love them as I love you  
Forgive them as I forgive you**



*How do I forgive while I still bleed?*

**Pray for them  
Ask for help for them  
Hold them up to me  
Give to me your hateful  
feelings about them.**

Father, this is so  
very hard. I want to hurt, to  
lash out  
not to forgive...  
OK, Father  
My feelings are not what  
I really want them to be  
I can't change that alone  
I am not that strong, but  
I want to want your will  
I want to want to love them  
to forgive them  
to bless them

**Perfect, my child  
You are headed in the right direction  
Keep wanting  
You will get there**

*I want to want...*

Peace  
warm enveloping arms about me  
hands reaching in  
healing my throbbing heart  
Warm golden glow  
Sunbathing in your love.



*By Mary Downs Huggins  
Round Rock, Texas*

find that my emotion was still so strong.

I could picture my stepfather, and I could say that I forgave him, but forgiveness was not that easy. The ungodly part of us resists granting forgiveness, reasoning that we can soften the pain of hurt by evening out the score. Our dark side tells us that we are justified in our feelings of indignation toward the offender. To really forgive my stepfather I had to work on it a little piece at a time. It was a step-by-step process back through the years. But in time and

with God's help, I was able to see him as a child of God and to understand that he had frailties and faults just like me. At last one day, relief flooded over me and through me, and I felt light and free. It was almost a mystical experience full of God's healing grace.

### EXPERIENCING FORGIVENESS

Those three perspectives of forgiveness have brought me to a fourth—the heavenly forgiveness of our Father. And it was that evening as I read the Believer's Prayer that it became clear to me.

God has forgiven us before we have even thought to ask. However, for us to be able to experience that forgiveness, we must first learn to forgive others. It is when we forgive others that we create the capacity in our souls to be able to realize and experience the forgiveness of our own misdeeds. God's forgiveness is not conditional upon our forgiving others, but the experience of the reception of his forgiveness is exactly so conditioned. It is true, after all, that we are forgiven our debts, even as we forgive our debtors."





# The Freedom of Forgiveness

By Ann Bendall  
Nambour, Australia

The process of forgiveness assumes a prior mental state in which one individual has assessed the actions or attitudes of another (or themselves) and has judged the person guilty of a misdeed. Since the *Urantia Book* states quite emphatically that no single individual in the universe has the power to judge, and we are required to be mercy ministers, then I can hypothesize that there should never be the need for forgiveness. Perhaps this is the ideal, and if so, there is a strong probability that we will be a long time in reaching this state.

I wonder if we are ever meant to, for as each of us is a freewill creature, mistakes and errors will eternally occur. In utilizing the mind circuitry that we are blessed with, we will oftentimes objectively survey the actions of ourselves and others and deem them inappropriate or not in accord with universal law—and that is where judgment occurs.

In any interaction there will be conflict of interest at times. Depending on the ego state of the individuals in respect to whether they regard themselves as responsible for the actions of others, or alternatively whether they believe that others should be responsible for their actions, individuals will levy the burden of blame on themselves or another person.

We live in a fascinating civilization on Urantia where the majority of cultures function on very precise win/lose, right/wrong mores. Most cultures also heavily restrict the development of individuality by devising standards of interaction which encourage folks to be parasitic to either state or society in general. It is per-

fectly understandable under these conditions that we seek redress for our deprivations in bitterness toward someone or something. Besides being rather puerile and illusionary, such action locks us into the prison of our own creation.

In my less aware days I strove so hard to be like the three wise monkeys. As I grew, I realized that I could not block from my intellect the fact that some people did downright wrong things through ignorance, fear, power or malice. Some of the things they did made me very sad and a little bitter. I grew a bit more and realized that whilst I carried bitterness, I continued to stagnate at the level of the unfortunate experience. I was not growing as a consequence of my experience. I read somewhere how it is not healthy to carry bitterness toward anyone, and so I magnanimously forgave everyone for the sake of my growth. That was not good enough. It was useless to forgive in my intellect; I really had to forgive with my heart.

I learned to sit down and look at the situation from the perspective of others. I came to the conclusion that because of their attitudes, fears, insecurities and life experiences, they had regarded me as a threat and had retaliated accordingly. In very few instances could I see that they, as they were, could have taken a more appropriate action. Of course they could have loved as Jesus loves, but that would have necessitated a miracle to occur within their beings. They were not in the right frame of mind for transformations to occur. They verily believed that all their problems would be solved by dealing with me in the manner in which they

did. It was useless for me to tell them I had forgiven them, for they believed that they had done no wrong. I truly prayed and asked for guidance as to how to love and understand them more so that I could see myself and the situation from their perspective. Michael has never failed to answer my prayer. I have been blessed with the ability truly to forgive them.

I am not quite sure if any individual on this semi-civilized planet is capable of making an informed decision to do malicious damage, for we still function on the animal level of flight/fight. However, our positions of power over one another are oftentimes abused. Normally we give little recognition to the individual in the process of walking all over them. They are merely an obstacle between ourselves and what we consider are our rights or desires. The man robbing the bank shoots the teller who stands between him and the object of his desire. The low-esteem mother determines that her child will be a nuclear scientist to prove her own self-worth. The middle-aged man leaves family and runs off with his secretary who is 20 years his junior in order to reestablish his desirability and capability as a man and lover. All of these are hardly situations in which there is a need for the innocent party to bestow forgiveness, for the reality is that the hardship, hurt and suffering of the innocent were simply by-products of the actions of another. The innocent were not considered as people; they were merely the poor unfortunates who happened to be in the way of the confused decision making of another.

The person who, with deliberate

See *FREEDOM* on page 14.





## The Divine Love of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the one word that represents the experience of both the doing of God's will and the full realization of the gospel of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Forgiveness symbolizes everything that Jesus taught, demonstrated, and lived as the Son of Man. Forgiveness is the actual form in which the love of God is both given and received in this world. It is the place where true brotherhood takes root and blossoms into the great Kingdom of Heaven within the hearts of the ascending children of God.

Jesus taught, "When a wise man understands the inner impulses of his fellows, he will love them. And when you love your brother, you have already forgiven him. This capacity to understand man's nature and forgive his apparent wrongdoing is Godlike." (1898:4/174.1.4) Forgiveness is in the prayer that countless believers use when they say, "The Lord's Prayer," which asks God to, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us." The lesson is that the technique for receiving the forgiving love that God offers is available to us through the willingness to forgive others. It is another way of saying that forgiveness of others is something that is really in my own interest to do, while it serves the interests of the forgiven as well.

The book, *A Course in Miracles*, goes into the subject in greater depth. On page 210, it reads, "Forgiveness is the key to happiness. What could you want that forgiveness cannot give? Do you want peace? Forgiveness offers it. Do you want happiness, a quiet mind, a certainty of purpose, and a sense of

worth and beauty that transcends the world? Do you want care and safety, and the warmth of sure protection always? Do you want a quietness that cannot be disturbed, a gentleness that can never be hurt, a deep, abiding comfort, and a rest so perfect it can never be upset?

"All this forgiveness offers you, and more. It sparkles on your eyes when you awake, and gives you joy with which to meet the day. It soothes your forehead while you sleep, and rests upon your eyelids so you see no dreams of fear and evil, malice and attack. And when you awake again, it offers you another day of happiness and peace.

"Here is the answer! Would you stand outside while all of heaven waits for you within? Forgive and be forgiven. As you give you will receive. There is no plan but this for the salvation of the Son of God."

The act of forgiveness functions to unite with those who are seen as separate, as non-brothers, for it identifies he who forgives with the forgiven as an equal child of God...as a brother. No longer does the grievance exist to be judged and no reason can be found to feel superior in any way to another of God's dearly beloved sons. Forgiveness extends my own spiritual identity to a stranger, reconciling him to me, and in whose innocent face I can see the Universal Father himself! At that miraculous instant, the stranger then becomes recognized as a brother. He or she is then transformed in my own perception, as my own perception itself is transformed through forgiveness.

Again, from *A Course in Miracles*, on page 328, there is a most

remarkable section entitled, "The Forgiven World." It reads: "Can you imagine how beautiful those you forgive will look to you? In no fantasy have you ever seen anything so lovely. Nothing you see here, sleeping or waking, comes near to such loveliness. And nothing will you value like unto this, nor hold so dear. Nothing that you remember that made your heart sing with joy has ever brought you even a little part of the happiness this sight will bring you. For you will see the Son of God. You will behold the beauty the Holy Spirit loves to look upon, and which he thanks the Father for. He was created to see this for you. And all his teaching leads to seeing it and giving thanks with him."

Forgiveness is the divine act of sharing our spiritual energies that results from the individual choice to love unconditionally. Yet, it is something which needs to be both learned as well as practiced. We do not always think we want to forgive or know just how to go about it. Like the apostle who asked Jesus, "How many times in one day should I forgive my neighbor, seven times?" to which Jesus replied, "I tell you, seventy times seven!" The desire to forgive is commensurate with the degree one desires to do the Father's will, for they are one and the same. God wills that we love one another, and our highest expression of love is forgiveness. This Jesus demonstrated right up to his crucifixion with his words, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He instructed his followers to love even their enemies which means offering them forgiveness and inclusion into

See *DIVINE* on page 15.



# Forgiveness: Study Notes



By Kaye and Bill Cooper  
Houston, Texas

*In the following notes, the quoted material appears in italics. Our comments about the reference follow in regular type.*

## GOD'S FORGIVENESS

*Jesus taught that sin is not the child of a defective nature but rather the offspring of a knowing mind dominated by an unsubmitive will. Regarding sin, he taught that God has forgiven; that we make such forgiveness personally available by the act of forgiving our fellows. When you forgive your brother in the flesh, you thereby create the capacity in your own soul for the reception of the reality of God's forgiveness of your own misdeeds. (1861:5/170.2.23)*

The concept that we experience God's forgiveness only after we have learned to forgive our fellows is one of those concepts that all Christians are familiar with (because of its expression in the Lord's prayer), yet it goes unacknowledged for the most part. If we interpret "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" to mean that God will not forgive us unless we forgive our fellows, then it is in conflict with our higher ideas of what a loving God would be like. I simply had not thought much about the matter until I pondered the explanations in *The Urantia Book*. And even then I had only a faith acceptance of the idea until experience brought it to life.

My experience suggests that we cannot truly accept in our hearts that God would forgive us and want to be with us until we have had the transforming experience of forgiving someone else. There is something in the experience of forgiving that changes our perspective. It is like the experience of parenthood. We have no idea how much our parents love us until we feel that overwhelming love in our own hearts for our own children.

## TO ACHIEVE FORGIVENESS

*It is not the purpose of true religion merely to bring peace but rather to insure progress. And there can be no peace in the heart or progress in the mind unless you fall wholeheartedly in love with truth, the ideals of eternal realities. (1745:1/157.2.2)*

I am convinced that one way to enlarge our capacity to forgive is to fall in love with the eternal reality of forgiveness. To focus our desires on it. To romance it in our minds until it sits comfortably there. To pray for recognition of our need to forgive, for understanding of the process of forgiveness, and for courage to pursue it in our lives.

*[Jesus to James Zebedee] "When the new teacher comes, let him teach you the poise of compassion and that sympathetic tolerance which is born of sublime confidence in me and of perfect submission to the Father's will." (1958:2/181.2.15)*

The phrases, "the poise of compassion" and "sympathetic tolerance" strikes me as descriptive of the attitude which fosters forgiveness. So, these comments constitute additional clues to the successful attainment of a forgiving attitude. First, we should have confidence in Jesus—sublime confidence, none of this half-hearted stuff. And second, we should progressively perfect our submission to the Father's will.

*And so must we clearly recognize that neither the golden rule nor the teaching of nonresistance can ever be properly understood as dogmas or precepts. They can only be comprehended by living them, by realizing their meanings in the living interpretation of the Spirit of Truth, who directs the loving contact of one*

*human being with another. (1950:6/180.5.11)*

This statement is my guarantee that I have help to forgive. I do not have to achieve forgiveness by myself. The Spirit of Truth stands ready to strengthen my resolve, to illuminate my understanding, to open my heart, to augment my wisdom, and to lead the way to forgiveness.

*He [Jesus] was not a moral skeptic; he viewed man positively, not negatively. He saw most men as weak rather than wicked, more distraught than depraved. But no matter what their status, they were all God's children and his brethren. (2093:3/196.2.9)*

Here we have a beautiful glimpse of the way God sees us, and of the way we should view our fellows if we seek to see as God sees. It has been of great assistance to me to have the easily remembered phrase, "weak rather than wicked" to remind me of the attitude I want to take toward others.

*...the teachers of this new religion are now equipped with spiritual weapons. They are to go out to conquer the world with unfailing forgiveness, matchless good will, and abounding love. They are equipped to overcome evil with good, to vanquish hate by love, to destroy fear with a courageous and living faith in truth. Jesus had already taught his followers that his religion was never passive; always were his disciples to be active and positive in their ministry of mercy and in their manifestations of love. (2064:3/194.3.11)*

*Pentecost endowed mortal man with the power to forgive personal injuries, to keep sweet in the midst of the gravest injustice, to remain un-*



*moved in the face of appalling danger, and to challenge the evils of hate and anger by the fearless acts of love and forbearance. (2064:3/194.3.12)*

The Spirit of Truth is our source of spiritual power, the power to do such things as forgive personal injuries and vanquish hate by love. This quote contains amazing statements. We are not instructed to do these things; we are told that we have been *given the power* to do them. The spirit can achieve them through us. So, how do we get this power? First, by wanting—no, more, maintaining a determination—to do God's will (these things the spirit empowers us to do are all God's will). Second, by allowing the spirit to work in our lives.

We allow the spirit to work in our lives when we act on what we think is God's will. Living the life of experience necessarily involves trial and error. We have to act and adjust our understanding and direction according to the results.

#### FROM FORGIVENESS TO LOVE

*You cannot truly love your fellows by a mere act of the will. Love is only born of thoroughgoing understanding of your neighbor's motives and sentiments. (1098:3/100.4.6)*

This quote gives us a clue to the failure of many of our attempts to forgive. We know we ought to forgive, so we try to will ourselves to do what is right. We attempt to forgive by an act of will. These attempts are, no doubt, appreciated by our Father for their sincerity, however they are doomed to more or less failure. Understanding of our neighbor's motives and sentiments is the key to forgiveness and eventually to love.

*If someone irritates you, causes feelings of resentment, you should sympathetically seek to discern his viewpoint, his reasons for such objectionable conduct. If once you understand your neighbor, you will become tolerant, and this tolerance will grow into friendship and ripen into love. (1098:1/100.4.4)*

This description of the process of learning to love encompasses for-

givenness. The road to loving begins with forgiving, and this quote gives us a key to the achievement of both states—seek to discern your neighbor's motives. This understanding enables you to forgive and eventually to love.

Discerning someone's viewpoint can be accomplished in several ways. One is to ask the person for an explanation. This quote gives us an important clue as to how to go about asking a person the reasons for his conduct. We need to be sympathetic and sincere in our questioning. So many times we house our criticism of others in questions. If we want to set out on the road to forgiveness and love, we must be certain that our approach to the person is not merely a cover for an attack. Jesus was so sincere and sympathetic when he approached the man who was beating his wife that he was able to halt the man's abuse and redirect him toward a new and better relationship with his spouse.

There are also non-confrontational ways to seek motives. I find that prayer is an excellent way to obtain new insights into the actions and character of others. The spirit often responds to my sincere desire to understand another person with a small revelation. God seems to be most happy to respond to my request to "see with God's eyes."

But why does understanding another person lead to forgiveness? The experience of seeing someone with God's eyes is always more than simply seeing the person in more depth. When I see someone with God's eyes, my attitude changes toward him or her. Suddenly I appreciate him for who he is and what he wants to be. It seems almost magical to me the difference which comes over my feelings. It may not be magic, but it is supernatural—it is prayer answered.

*Jesus portrayed conquest by sacrifice, the sacrifice of pride and selfishness. By showing mercy, he meant to portray spiritual deliverance from all grudges, grievances, anger,*

*and the lust for selfish power and revenge. And when he said, "Resist not evil," he later explained that he did not mean to condone sin or to counsel fraternity with iniquity. He intended the more to teach forgiveness, to "resist not evil treatment of one's personality, evil injury to one's feelings of personal dignity." (1590:3/141.3.8)*

Jesus promised that the truth would make us free. One of the things we gain freedom from is the internal misery caused by holding grudges, grievances, anger and the lust for selfish power and revenge. Anyone who has given up these caustic attitudes can attest to the wonderful sense of freedom left behind.

This quote illuminates one of the key elements of forgiveness. Forgiveness has to do with letting go of the defense of one's feelings. So much of what we need to forgive involves our hurt feelings over other people's actions. Have you ever heard yourself or someone else say, "It's not so much what he did, it's the principle of the thing!" More often than not what the speaker means is, "My pride is hurt." When we resist evil treatment of our feelings and injury to our personal dignity, we pile up resentments and things which need our forgiveness. The practice of forgiveness eventually leads to a higher state wherein we do not go around collecting hurts.

*After a short silence Jesus looked significantly at all four and answered: "My brethren, you err in your opinions because you do not comprehend the nature of those intimate and living relations between the creature and the Creator, between man and God. You fail to grasp that understanding sympathy which the wise parent entertains for his immature and sometimes erring child. It is indeed doubtful whether intelligent and affectionate parents are ever called upon to forgive an average and normal child. Understanding relationships associated with atti-*

*See NOTES on page 17.*



# Unity Bug Opens Closed Minds

By David Jaquith  
Newberg, Oregon

Major Goodfellow called a while back and asked if he might drop by.

Mary had coffee and blueberry muffins ready. After the exchange of greetings and other cultural courtesies, he got serious.

"There's going to be trouble here in River City," he said.

I could see why he was worried. It seems that the Reformed Church of Creationism had booked Community Civic Hall for meetings on the same weekend the United Universal Evolutionists were holding revival meetings.

The Downtown Business business people are nervous," the major continued. "They remember the fire of '06 that burned historic Old Loggerhead Hall to the ground due to overheated debate.

"To make matters worse, they've both applied for parade permits on Saturday. The River City Ministerial Association is doing what it can to avoid disaster. And there's been

heavy citizen enrollment in Reynard College conflict resolution courses. But it doesn't look good."

We both had seconds on the blueberry muffins. I tried to be helpful. "People have strong opinions about their beliefs. Especially where politics and religion are concerned."

He sighed. "Tell me about it."

Mary filled his cup. He took a sip, then added, "When it comes to religion, I think people sometimes forget God and worship their beliefs."

This brought up the question of who believes what and why. And what is the difference between a belief and an opinion.

Mary was listening to our conversation. She came from the kitchen where she'd been washing breakfast dishes to add, "When I say I believe something, I mean this is what I believe at this time. It does not mean that I will never change. Beliefs are like children. They should be given room to grow."

## Lighten Up



"Good point," said Major Goodfellow. "Our beliefs cause problems when we think everyone else has to believe exactly as we do. It's how wars get started."

At that point the mayor had to rush away for an emergency session of the city council, leaving us to wonder just how River City would handle its impending conflict.

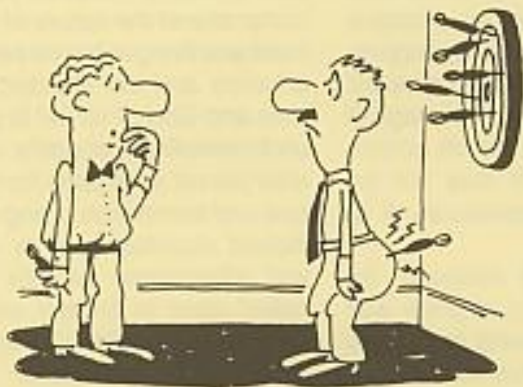
Well, do you know, the weekend came and went with no fires, no broken glass or busted heads. It was strange. The Creationists had their march down Core Avenue, and the Evolutionists had their march up Prima Boulevard. Then, if you can believe it, paraders and spectators alike all marched together, 10,000 strong, to a mass meeting in Osten Amphitheater east of town.

How could this be? The place was packed. Stores and gas stations all over town had closed. People flocked in, taking seats to the harmonious sound of "All people who on earth do dwell"—sung by the combined choirs of River City's 30-odd churches. The speaker mounted the platform, the crowd hushed. For two hours, the audience was held enthralled. When it was over, everyone went quietly and happily to their homes and warm beds. No traffic officers were needed to disperse the

See UNITY on page 11.

## Forgiveness

*Sometimes it's harder than others...*



*...to turn  
the other  
cheek.*



# UB Soap Opera

By Tommie Clendenning  
Allen, Texas

Hey, all you parents out there—How about that Adam and Eve story? Pretty scary, huh? I mean Adamson *finally* left home when he was 120 years old! And they're supposed to be the ideal pattern for us?! I don't know about you all, but if Steve and I play our cards right, I expect our kids to be outa the house by age 19 or 20—22 or 23, Max!!

Then I have to wonder about Ratta. Falling for a guy six times her age? I guess when he said, "Hey, Baby!," she figured she could handle him (or at least outrun him when she wasn't in the mood). Plus, he probably told her his line about having very famous parents and their huge garden estate down south. Typical snow job. You know the type.

Well, everything's fine for a while. Then she starts having invisible kids! ...But, after all, Dad is definitely no spring chicken. I mean he's plenty old enough for some chromosomal mutations to slip into the old genes. I guess Ratta musta been able to see them though, or surely she'd have left the guy at this point! I mean, you go through nine months of your body being totally outa control, resembling a blimp, throwing up, and then *labor!!* All for nothing? How many of you women would go through that and have nothing to show for it? ...Me neither!! Just think, delivery time finally comes (I guess the midwife and neighbor women probably came over to help) and after it's all over, there's no kid!!

I can just see it: Ratta's sitting there nursing and rocking—nothing. Un-huh!! They probably thought she was pretty wierd marrying a dude

that's 120-plus years old, but this??? You think those neighbor women are gonna come back next time? In fact, they'll probably pack up their families and move. I mean would you want your kids playing with kids that weren't there?

Then there comes old man Adamson after they've had two of these invisible kids, a boy and a girl and decides to mate them. Yeah, he's getting a little kinky in his old age! Can he do that? I thought incest was illegal. I mean, obviously you've got some screwed up genetics to start with, and now you mate the two of them? Doesn't sound too smart to me—But what do you expect from someone who's got to be about 130!«

*UNITY from page 10.*

crowds. Everyone courteously took turns at intersections.

Again, how could this be? The

mystery was solved when it was learned that a unity virus had somehow gotten into the River City water system. It had people acting very strange for several weeks. Wives and husbands got along better. Young children played together without fighting and older children cleaned their rooms without being asked.

River City Sanitation Landfill was piled high with signs reading "Down with Evolution—Up with God" and "Down with Creation—Up with Chance."

It seems that as a result of the unity virus certain Creationists and not a few Evolutionists were secretly considering the possibility that God was capable of creating in time's frame or outside it; that a billion years or a twinkling of an eye is all the same to the Infinite Person. In which case there would be no need for people to polarize into hostile camps.

There could be a unity of belief (opinion?) that we could have the best of both worlds: Scientists can enjoy contemplating the possibility of a Creator while studying the progressive growth of species; believers in God as creator need not feel that to consider evolution is to deny divine creation.

It's that unity bug. It must have gotten to me.«

## Forgiveness

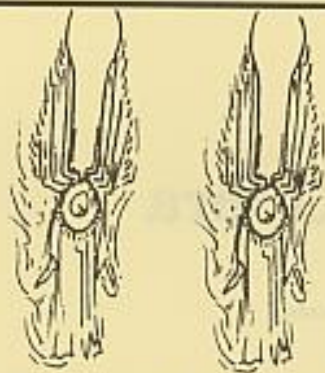
"If someone irritates you, causes feelings of resentment, you should sympathetically seek to discern his viewpoint, his reasons for such objectionable conduct."  
(1098:1/100.4.4)





# about angels

By Gene Joyce  
Richardson, Texas



The angels "love human beings and only good can result from your efforts to understand and love them" (419:1/38.2.1)

Here are two more examples in which seraphim guarded their charges.

My friend, Marian, was always at the wheel when she and her husband went out, although he was the classic backseat driver and verbally directed every turn. One day as they approached a corner, he said, "Turn left." When she did not move over into the left lane, he repeated loudly, "Turn left, turn!" What had happened was that Marian had "heard" a powerful command in her mind (how can you describe it?) saying, "NO!" She continued straight ahead as an enormous eighteen wheeler whizzed by where they would have been if she had turned. The huge truck had run a red light.

My second story is not so dramatic, in that no one heard a voice in his mind, but the element of coincidence is so astounding that I shall leave it to the reader what to think.

*DECIDING from page 2.*

means that you are not watching for signs of betrayal, but anticipating signs of growth.

Hidden unforgiveness is a most perplexing obstacle to inner peace. Before you can decide to forgive someone, you have to honestly recognize that you have a need to forgive.

One clue to hidden forgiveness is tension. Failure to forgive always causes inner tension in me. Sometimes the tension is so high that I feel like there is a lump inside me. If when

This happened in rural Illinois when country roads were a narrow two lanes with no shoulders. There was little traffic and poor visibility because of the frequent small hills. Teenagers of the day had a favorite pastime as soon as they were allowed to drive the family car—to drive very fast on the wrong side of the road as they went over the hills. One evening, as my former brother-in-law told the story, he and three of his friends were playing this game. Just as they reached the crest of a hill, on the wrong side of the road as usual, another car filled with kids coming from the opposite direction passed them—also on the wrong side.

*For over twenty years a friend and I have enjoyed personal experiences with the angels. This experience has been so rewarding that I would like to encourage more and more people to search for and find convincing evidence that the angels have participated in their lives, and I would greatly appreciate your sharing these experiences with the readers of this column.*

I think of a person or event, there is tension or a "lump" within me, then regardless of what my logical mind is telling me about how I have forgiven the person, I know that there is spiritual work to be done.

## A SENSE OF JUSTICE

Your sense of justice poses the second major impediment to being ready to forgive. Justice tells you that the person with whom you are angry has done something wrong and does not deserve to be forgiven. He deserves to be punished. Your sense of justice is offended.

Not only that—there seems to be some connection in most people's minds between forgiving on the one hand and condoning the offense on the other. Since you do not wish to condone the action, you hold on to that inner feeling of disapproval and blame. There is a tension inside—a grasping of the hurt, anger, disapproval or irritation. You clutch these feelings to your emotional self and will not let go.

At the core of this sense of outraged justice is a will to punish. The person has done something wrong, and you will punish him *by not forgiving him*. Religion teaches you not to retaliate for wrongs, but to many people withholding forgiveness is an acceptable way to punish. It is not very logical to think that your inner tension and pain will punish another person, but these are emotional processes, not logical ones.

Deciding that you are ready to forgive means that you have to recognize this unattractive fact about yourself and decide to quit punishing the person. If you have reached this bewildering point, you may want to ask, "How do I do that?"

The first thing to do is to turn to God for help. Ask him to prepare you for forgiving. This is a prayer which will give his heart joy. You can expect to be helped. Exercise faith in God's help and your receptivity. Your change of attitude may occur almost instantaneously, or it may take time—days, weeks, even months. If it does require time, be persistent. Keep praying and asking for God to give you a new perspective.

In order to help God to answer your prayer to release the desire for punishment, become an active partner: Imagine how you will feel when you no longer hold on to the emotions and resist forgiving.

It might also help to focus on all the rewards of letting go of the need to punish.

## LETTING GO OF PUNISHMENT

I can observe in my own life several rewards which result from letting go of the desire to punish.



They are very attractive to me and serve as excellent motivation.

1. *I feel better.* I've come to enjoy a state of inner peace much of the time. Unforgiveness causes me inner turmoil that I want to be rid of. "Running the tapes" of someone's obnoxious behavior and my outrage is *not fun!*

When I refuse to release my hurt, anger or disappointment, I hold these destructive things within me where they can do all sorts of damage—mental and physical as well as spiritual. These emotions are painful. They can poison my enjoyment of the present, taint my memories of the past, and cast a pall on the future.

Release of my need to punish relieves my tension, puts me at ease and at peace. I am convinced that it contributes to good mental and physical health and adds joy to life. Maybe this desire to feel better is a selfish motive, but it is an incredibly powerful one!

2. *I enjoy satisfaction.* When I let go of punishment, I do something I *know* is God's will. There are many times in life when I am unsure just what God's will is for me. In this case I *know* his will—do not punish. I have a well-nurtured desire to do God's will. It is the overriding goal of my life. The sense of satisfaction I feel at doing something I know is God's will is highly rewarding to me.

3. *I am free to think.* Holding on to punishment keeps me a prisoner to that state of mind. Preserving my right to feel justified in my anger really distorts my thinking. All I think must be compatible with my being right and the other person being wrong. Sometimes I even require friends to pass a new test in order to remain my friends: do they agree that I am right? The longer I hold a desire to punish, the more distortions there are in my thoughts.

Once I let go of punishment, I am free to think as I was meant to. My mind is free of the emotional "static" which interfered with my seeing God's will. I can much more reliably perceive God's will and his guidance

for my life. I am free to make ever more excellent choices, free to rise to new heights, free to think clearly and see clearly. It's a feeling I revel in, like the air on a crisp fall day.

4. *I am free to feel.* If I have applied the Novocaine method to relieve the pain caused by my desire to punish, I will have anesthetized my good feelings as well. There will be dead places within me that should be free to live life fully.

Once I let go of punishment, the pain caused by holding the emotions of hurt, anger, and disappointment is released also. There is no longer a need to numb my inner life. I am free to experience the person as someone I care for. I can enjoy the attributes I admire in her or him. I can feel God's love pour through me to him as it should. I may also feel pain, but it is pain for him—sadness because I observe the same behavior in him that I wanted to punish in the first place. This pain is a necessary part of life as a God-aware mortal. It is made bearable by my faith that he will grow and change. Best of all, I am free to seek ways that I can truly serve his genuine needs. The door to the joy of service swings wide.

Maybe the best inducement to let go of punishment is the experience of doing it. Once you have tried it a few times, the battle seems to get much easier.

#### WHAT NEXT?

There are several steps which may be included in the process of forgiving, but deciding that you are ready to forgive is the key step. Once

you have made a decision to forgive, you have set into motion two things which will contribute to your success.

First, a decision to forgive focuses your powerful psychological abilities toward that end. The human will is a God-given gift of power. You wield that power as you make decisions. You are like the general who communicates his decision to the army. A vast army of men and machines mobilizes to achieve his goal. Once you decide to do something, your mind mobilizes to accomplish that goal. God created you to function that way.

Second, your decision is noticed and supported by the spiritual world. The Thought Adjuster sends you an immediate confirmation, "Yes, my child, this is the way!" He will support and encourage you at each step. I can imagine the angels cheering as you decide you want to forgive. They wait breathlessly for orders to give you assistance to implement your decision. The order comes quickly, and they begin laying their plans to use external circumstances to assist you. The Spirit of Truth stands ready to lead the way to your forgiving. You are by no means alone in carrying out your decision to forgive.

So if you have found it hard to forgive, try asking yourself if you are ready to let go of punishment and disapproval. If not, deal with your resistance. Once you make the decision to forgive, you will find your efforts multiplied by your own inner resources and those of the spiritual world as well. "

#### The Circles Calendar

*The Circles* is published three times a year. (We also solicit donations in November and March). Our yearly calendar:

	<u>Articles Due</u>	<u>Mail</u>
Spring-Summer	Dec. 15	May 1
Fall	April 15	Aug. 15
Winter	Aug. 1	Dec. 1



# PARENTING

By Gene Joyce  
Richardson, Texas

## Basic Truths

By Gene Joyce  
Richardson, Texas

Sixty years after the fact, I can still remember my father asking, "Why don't you make as good grades as Mary Alice?" Not only did this *not* spur me on to greater scholastic achievement, it definitely turned me off on Mary Alice. As I remember, my grades were in the low nineties as it was, so why be negative and chip away at my self-esteem? Remember that Jesus carefully avoided the negative form of teaching; he refused to advertise evil. It appears that one of his chief goals in life was a "suberb self-respect." It follows that he endeavored to restore a feeling of self-worth to all those who had lost it. One of the most superior mothers I have observed always said, "There are two things I most want to give my children—self-respect and the ability to earn their own living."

It would be helpful to read Jesus' definition of a true family on page 1604 in *The Urantia Book*. It so clearly and completely gives the responsibilities of mature parents for their children. Also notice in the following discourse to the apostles on page 1605 how Jesus addresses them as "my children" and how he yearns for them to become more mature, just as human fathers do, yet he continues to love them and promises to bear with them to the very end.

The following are some general suggestions for child rearing taken from *The Urantia Book*:

1. It is civilization's protection of the child from the natural consequences of foolish conduct that contributes so much to modern insubordination. (941:1/84.7.20) Remember that Jesus began wise discipline with his brothers and sisters at such an early age that little or no punishment was required later.

2. It is from the family that both parents and children learn those essential lessons of patience, tolerance and forbearance. Of course each parent must run these wise instructions through their own minds and translate them to their particular situation. The attitude of being a willing learner can be helpful and somehow comforting when things seem not to be going well.

3. Remember that the Universal Father *always* forgives. It follows that the mature parent would do likewise.

4. Family conferences would greatly improve our society. This was a practice of the Andites.

So many basic truths of child rearing are quite obvious once seen, but it often takes a long time to recognize them all on your own. For instance Jesus said, "...a wise parent never takes sides in the petty quarrels of his own children." (1589:4/141.3.3) This one concept would be a God-send to most families I have known.

As you make provision for the pleasures of your children, remem-

ber to enjoy them yourselves. In retrospect these early years are over so quickly. A friend just remarked to me, "People usually don't pay much attention to sermons." I pray that I have held your attention thus far. "I know whereof I speak." These things are important. ◀

*FREEDOM* from page 6.

premeditation, harms another can only damage the material shell. Wrong as the action may be, the reality is that God will more than compensate the injured party with growth in love and wisdom, plus a wondrous contrastive appreciation of the body when they are released from its shackles on the mansion worlds. To the person who believes that the world will be enjoyable only if another is permanently removed from it, what a shock awaits them on the mansion worlds! If we deliberate our own perfection for a few minutes, we must pose the question associated with a non-forgiving attitude toward another: "Why the hell should we demand a higher level of perfection from another than we are capable of achieving?!" Most folks walking this planet have a decidedly confused attitude toward life and others. If we take into account our sublime ignorance, we cannot do anything other than forgive the misdeeds of others. And when we do, we have a more informed understanding of Jesus' words as he was nailed to the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Conscience rightly admonishes us to do right. If we will attune ourselves to the leadings of our Thought Adjuster, we will be educated on what actually is right. I have a decided penchant to judge myself, normally with the idiotic utilization of the wisdom of retrospection. Surrounded by the chaos of my misdeeds (by my definition of misdeed), I then judge myself, get cross with my stupidity, and refuse to forgive myself. This causes no end of anguish to me and, I stongly suspect, my Thought Adjuster. Try as I might, it is hard to break the habit despite the



fact that I know God has forgiven me. I suspect that I am a long time in kicking the habit of expecting more of myself than is achievable. To not forgive ourselves is just as stupid as not forgiving another. Until we can do so, we are locked—emotionally, intellectually and spiritually—at that level. I suspect that we also shackle the object of our puerile rigidity. We release both ourselves and the other party for growth as an adjunct of our experience only if we truly forgive.

God sees us in Truth. He does not expect perfection. He knows we only learn by life experience. He sees our inner motives. He sees the illusions we call reality. He understands our animal nature and how hard it is for us to rise above. He also knows if we truly love him as our Father and see every other human being as our brother or sister, then we will strive to love each and every one of them as he does, as he wishes us to do.

It is easy to love the lovable. To love the unlovable requires understanding them as they are. God will give us this if our love is pure. He expects us to see reality. There is not much point in giving forgiveness if the person does not regard himself as having done wrong. Sometimes the individual, in his confusion, can hurt another and believe that it is correct. The hurt individual is the one required to forgive the injustice and release himself from the scenario. Then it is up to God, to educate the deluded party on a little more universal law, as it appears that he has not gained from the experience of hitting another over the head.

For ourselves, if we do wrong, but deny same, then we cannot receive God's forgiveness since, by our own free will, we regard ourselves as not having committed a misdemeanor. To be forgiven by God requires our recognition and acceptance that we have goofed. God's forgiveness is offered at the first pre-thought that leads to our error. His forgiveness has full effect at such time as we recognize in full

honesty our mistake. On the other hand, if we are the subject of another's malice and cannot forgive, then we fester in the boghold of giving power to that person and incident, power which rightfully belongs to God, if we are to grow.

I verily believe that man is a social being and when one person deliberately does harm to another, he or she is acting in the manner of a person who is temporarily insane from a cosmic viewpoint. If I cannot understand the motives of others by simply looking at their behavior and that which they have hoped to achieve as a result of same, I cannot declare them as being of a fit state of mind to make an informed logical decision. In other words, I regard that person as having temporary insanity.

Where another person is concerned, I do not believe that it is necessary for me ever to forgive. I refuse to place any person in the position of God in my life. Only one person has power over me, and that is God. Only one person can ever hurt me, and that is me. «

Avoid missing issues:  
Send us your  
change of address.

*DIVINE* from page 7.

the Kingdom of Heaven as well.

So, how do we forgive when we feel that we would rather not? We must recognize that we will continue to be unhappy and suffer if we refuse to show compassion and hold onto our personal grievances. Jesus explained, "Your inability or unwillingness to forgive your fellows is the measure of your immaturity, your failure to attain adult sympathy, understanding, and love. You hold grudges and nurse vengefulness in direct proportion to your ignorance of the inner nature and true longings of your children and your fellow beings. Love is the outworking of the divine and inner urge of life. It is founded on understanding, nurtured by unselfish service, and perfected in wisdom."

(1898:5/174.1.5)

Making the choice to forgive or not is balanced between the egoistic value of personal judgement of others and the spiritual value of loving one's neighbor as one's own self. Forgiveness shows you that your neighbor is one and the same as you—and with you in the family of God, as an equal.

Personal judgment, however, always serves to inflate the ego as a superior. It seeks to be regarded as special and engages in special love or special hate relationships as a means of maintaining the sense of separation. The making of either allies or enemies is necessary to operate a war, which is the opposite of love. Merciful forgiveness is the only way to avoid war. So, the choice is really over whether we desire peace or war, for only one of those two can dominate the mind. One is the will of God and the other is the arrogance of the egocentric, self-righteous, and the proud character.

To want to forgive is a call for the grace of God to share his love through our very being. Forgiveness tells the forgiven that he is worthy of God's love. All that is needed to make this miracle happen is the simple desire. A prayer to ask for God's help will remind us from where our strength comes, this grace that brings the sweet inner peace of forgiveness. And soon comes the recognition that what is truly forgiven is forgotten as if it never happened. Our mind is then released from hate, for as it is written in the Bible, "Perfect love casts out all fear." «

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See back cover.



EYES from page 3.

You see the real needs of the person. In doing this, you may realize that the person you are trying to forgive is fearful and insecure just like you. God sees us all as his children, as immature, budding spirits. He sees our potentials, our strengths and weaknesses and loves us so very much just the same. He does not discriminate. We are all prone to errors—great and small. And we all still can hurt each other. He knows these are only immature decisions on our part.

As you move closer to seeing the situation with a different perspective, you start looking at the individual's true needs and desires. A new understanding and change of attitude comes to you. You no longer feel that the person is trying to hurt you. Instead you see that he or she may be reacting out of frustration because someone has hurt him. You see him as a person who acted childishly and immaturity. And in the process he vented his emotions on you. Whether he did it deliberately or not is of no concern to you now because you understand his motives. The scenario of the vicious, snarling cave man is a prime example. When we first glance quickly at the situation, we think the man is primitive and hate filled. If we look further, we see that he is honorably protecting his family from a threatening tiger. What a change it makes to understand motives!

Even when the motives are not so honorable, you now have the understanding that your brother is only human. Then you can better love him. This new-found viewpoint is so important in the role of forgiving. The understanding heart makes it easier to love and forgive.

#### FORGIVENESS

Are you ready to totally release any anger or animosity left over? If so, you are ready to forgive and let God transform those feelings into love, caring and acceptance. As you seek intimacy with the Father, he will help change you. You may want to

imagine the person standing before you in your mind. Tell him that you are forgiving him now and are releasing all into God's hands. You can imagine the Father standing with you as you let love and understanding flow from yourself to your newly forgiven brother or sister. Tell him you are making a new start now. Feel God's love and acceptance wash over and through you. Let his peace renew your mind and body.

Forgiveness of yourself for your part in all of this is sometimes necessary, and it may be just as important. I have found, to my utter surprise, that I am often hardest on myself.

Sometimes God uses different ways to help you as you work through your different growth steps. Symbolism in various forms occasionally may come to you. You may see it mentally or even feel it in your body as you work through these processes and release the emotions. Accept those symbols and let them help you.

As you let all negative emotions go, you can look at your sister or brother with understanding and love. Through faith now accept and know that forgiveness is complete.

#### SERVICE

The final part of forgiveness is not to be taken lightly. Along with the commandment to love our neighbor as ourself is the requirement to serve him. In fact, service is a result of the outpouring of forgiveness and love.

As you view the sister or brother you have forgiven, you see him through your new eyes of love. When you pray for him and then look deeply into your heart, you will be amazed at the love you genuinely feel for him. You can actually feel God's love pouring through you to him. True love wants to serve and help the other grow. It is a good idea to take time now and look for all the good things you can find about that person. It may be that you can admire his cooking abilities or his organizational skills. Whatever you see, let them be pointers to ways to serve him. A well-deserved compliment or an appoint-

ment to head an organizational committee would be serving him. Little things you do or say, a smile, a friendly and sweet gesture may be all that is needed. When you want to serve someone, you truly want what is good for him. You want to help him grow.

#### CONTINUED PRAYER

Your new-found peace is truly wonderful, but you may still have some work to do. Constant prayer for your brother or sister and for yourself is the key to continued growth. It may be that you still have to work through some difficult times together. Oftentimes there will be many levels of forgiveness and understanding. As you break through each one, rejoice and feel blessed. Continue to seek to see the person with your new eyes of love.

Sometimes, however, old tapes and emotions may surface again. Once again go back and look at your fears and emotions. It could take several times of serious searching, praying and releasing before you totally release all.

Occasionally you may hold back just a little because you are afraid you may be hurt again. You may feel you have to protect yourself. If so, you must dig deeper channels to God. This is where continued prayer and forgiveness for your friend and vigilance for your own spiritual attitude is so important.

As you grow spiritually over the years, your goal will be to learn to love unconditionally. The little things and even the big things won't bother you as much. You won't take offense. You will learn to see others through the eyes of love. "

The back cover tells about our next theme. But we are most happy to have articles on other topics too.



NOTES from page 9.

tudes of love effectively prevent all those estrangements which later necessitate the readjustment of repentance by the child with forgiveness by the parent.

"A part of every father lives in the child. The father enjoys priority and superiority of understanding in all matters connected with the child-parent relationship. The parent is able to view the immaturity of the child in the light of the more advanced parental maturity, the riper experience of the older partner. With the earthly child and the heavenly Father, the divine parent possesses infinity and divinity of sympathy and capacity for loving understanding. Divine forgiveness is inevitable; it is inherent and inalienable in God's infinite understanding, in his perfect knowledge of all that concerns the mistaken judgment and erroneous choosing of the child. Divine justice is so eternally fair that it unfailingly embodies understanding mercy.

"When a wise man understands the inner impulses of his fellows, he will love them. And when you love your brother, you have already forgiven him. This capacity to understand man's nature and forgive his apparent wrongdoing is Godlike. If you are wise parents, this is the way you will love and understand your children, even forgive them when transient misunderstanding has apparently separated you. The child, being immature and lacking in the fuller understanding of the depth of the child-father relationship, must frequently feel a sense of guilty separation from a father's full approval, but the true father is never conscious of any such separation. Sin is an experience of creature consciousness; it is not a part of God's consciousness.

"Your inability or unwillingness to forgive your fellows is the measure of your immaturity, your failure to attain adult sympathy, understanding, and love. You hold grudges and nurse vengefulness in direct proportion to your ignorance of the inner nature

and true longings of your children and your fellow beings. Love is the outworking of the divine and inner urge of life. It is founded on understanding, nurtured by unselfish service, and perfected in wisdom." (1898:2-5/174.1.2-5)

Forgiveness is an antecedent to love. The more Godlike our love, the less necessity for us to forgive. God forgives in advance—actually, he does not take offense, so he does not need to forgive. We may feel a "sense of guilty separation" from God, but God does not feel any separation. So when we create within our souls the capacity to experience God's forgiveness (by forgiving our fellows), our sense of guilty separation is alleviated; and we feel God's ever-present love and acceptance. We interpret this feeling as God's forgiveness.

We can make progress toward the Godlike attitude of taking no offense. The beginning place is understanding—by remedying our "ignorance of the inner nature and true longings" of our fellows. Understanding is the foundation. Unselfish service nurtures our progress. And wisdom—that interaction of experience and values—matures our attitude. What we achieve is forgiveness, but more—love.

Jesus...opposed negative or purely passive nonresistance. Said he: "When an enemy smites you on one cheek, do not stand there dumb and passive but in positive attitude turn the other; that is, do the best thing possible actively to lead your brother in error away from the evil paths into the better ways of righteous living." Jesus required his followers to react positively and aggressively to every life situation. The turning of the other cheek, or whatever act that may typify, demands initiative, necessitates vigorous, active, and courageous expression of the believer's personality.

Jesus did not advocate the practice of negative submission to the indignities of those who might purposely seek to impose upon the prac-

tioners of nonresistance to evil, but rather that his followers should be wise and alert in the quick and positive reaction of good to evil to the end that they might effectively overcome evil with good. Forget not, the truly good is invariably more powerful than the most malignant evil. (1770:1-2/159.5.9-10)

Forgiveness and loving service for the forgiven have been mistaken for the passive response of a weakling. This passage makes clear that passivity was not what Jesus had in mind nor what he practiced. It takes courage of a high order to overcome your own fear and anger to see the potential and needs of a person whose actions have injured you or someone you care about and to find a way to reach out to the good in that person. It requires an act of some creativity to envision a way to do good to someone who is behaving offensively. But to exercise that creativity in the midst of your own emotional reaction is truly a challenge. Yet that is what Jesus advocated. That is what he did. When faced with representatives sent by the Sanhedrin to arrest him, he successfully offered them the kingdom. While being subjected to the incredible pain of crucifixion, he prayed for forgiveness for the men nailing him to the cross. Forgiveness and the expressions of love it leads to are high acts of courage, steadfastness and valor.

#### FROM LOVE TO SERVICE

You are destined to live a narrow and mean life if you learn to love only those who love you. Human love may indeed be reciprocal, but divine love is outgoing in all its satisfaction-seeking. The less of love in any creature's nature, the greater the love need, and the more does divine love seek to satisfy such need. Love is never self-seeking, and it cannot be self-bestowed. Divine love cannot be self-contained; it must be unselfishly bestowed. (1739:6/156.5.11)

This must surely be one of the  
See NOTES on page 18.



NOTES from page 17.

most astonishing passages in *The Urantia Book*. I am amazed that anyone, even God, carries love to this extreme—to love most those who love least. How unlovable these creatures must be! And God pursues them to extend his love in spite of every rejection, every mean act.

Even while my logical mind puzzles over this illogical choice, my experience reveals to me why God gives his love so unselfishly. When I am being most unlovable, irascible, irritating and downright tacky, that is the very time when I need most to be loved. My inner self cries out for someone to show me that I am not unlovable and not irretrievable. Sometimes my spouse rises to the occasion and lavishes me with reassurances of love, with reminders that this time will pass and I will be my usual lovable self. Like a desert in the wet season, I soak up the spirit waters of love and blossom. Love under those circumstances is truly transforming to the recipient!

We are called to forgive the weak, the immature, the erring. Not only are we to forgive them but we are to love them—*servethem*. And when we do, we will wield the incredible power of the spirit which transforms.

#### SELF-FORGIVENESS

*When primitive man felt that his communion with God had been interrupted, he resorted to sacrifice of some kind in an effort to make atonement, to restore friendly relationship. The hunger and thirst for righteousness leads to the discovery of truth, and truth augments ideals, and this creates new problems for the individual religionists, for our ideals tend to grow by geometrical progression, while our ability to live up to them is enhanced only by arithmetical progression.*

*The sense of guilt (not the consciousness of sin) comes either from interrupted spiritual communion or from the lowering of one's moral ideals. Deliverance from such a predicament can only come through the realization that one's highest moral*

*ideals are not necessarily synonymous with the will of God. Man cannot hope to live up to his highest ideals, but he can be true to his purpose of finding God and becoming more and more like him. (1133:2-3/103.4.2-3)*

I am very glad that this passage was included in *The Urantia Book*. It helps me to understand why we who aspire to higher and higher lives suffer from guilt and self-judgment. The higher our ideals, the greater the gap between what we are and what we aspire to be. I am satisfied that I need to be as forgiving of myself for my sincere failures as I am of anyone else. Rather than languishing in guilt, what I need to concentrate on is being true to my purpose of "finding God and becoming more and more like him."

*The theme of Jesus' instructions during the sojourn at Sidon was spiritual progression. He told them they could not stand still; they must go forward in righteousness or retrogress into evil and sin. He admonished them to "forget those things which are in the past while you push forward to embrace the greater realities of the kingdom." He besought them not to be content with their childhood in the gospel but to strive for the attainment of the full stature of divine sonship in the communion of the spirit and in the fellowship of believers.*

*Said Jesus: "My disciples must not only cease to do evil but learn to do well; you must not only be cleansed from all conscious sin, but you must refuse to harbor even the feelings of guilt. If you confess your sins, they are forgiven; therefore must you maintain a conscience void of offense." (1736:3-4/156.2.6-7)*

Here I find further confirmation that God wishes us to accept his forgiveness and forgive ourselves. When we sincerely express our regret for our mistakes, we are forgiven. We are not supposed to go around feeling guilty—unless we are resisting what we know is God's will for us. If the wording on this quote is

precise, even our deliberate choices of ways contrary to God's will are forgiven once we recognize our poor choice and repent. We should not be spending time regretting the past, but eagerly seeking to find and do God's will for our lives. And if we occasionally make a mistake (as we all do!), then we pick ourselves up and get on with the search.

#### FORGIVENESS VS. JUSTICE

*"Although you cannot determine the eternal fate of the individual, you may legislate regarding the conduct of the group, for, where two or three of you agree concerning any of these things and ask of me, it shall be done for you if your petition is not inconsistent with the will of my Father in heaven. And all this is ever true, for, where two or three believers are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them."*

*Simon Peter was the apostle in charge of the workers at Hippos, and when he heard Jesus thus speak, he asked: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?" And Jesus answered Peter: "Not only seven times but even to seventy times and seven." (1763:0-1/159.1.3-4)*

*Thus did Jesus teach the dangers and illustrate the unfairness of sitting in personal judgment upon one's fellows. Discipline must be maintained, justice must be administered, but in all these matters the wisdom of the brotherhood should prevail. Jesus invested legislative and judicial authority in the group, not in the individual. Even this investment of authority in the group must not be exercised as personal authority. There is always danger that the verdict of an individual may be warped by prejudice or distorted by passion. Group judgment is more likely to remove the dangers and eliminate the unfairness of personal bias. Jesus sought always to minimize the elements of unfairness, retaliation, and vengeance. (1764:1/159.1.6)*

I think it is important to deal with a confusion which arises in the minds



## *It's Happening in Vancouver, British Columbia*



# Adventures in Spiritual Living

## *Come On Up*

*We're going to have  
a great time!*

### Activities:

Seeing with God's Eyes  
Prayer in the Moment  
Listening from the Heart  
Spiritual Support Group  
Letter to God  
Spiritual Power Tools  
Musical Adventures

**Where:** Pioneer Chehalis Conference Centre, Harrison Mills, British Columbia (near Vancouver)

**When:** May 8-10 1992. Check in after 4 PM Friday. Check out 1 PM Sunday.

**Deadline:** To receive discounts of \$20 (\$25 Canadian) per person, early registration must be post-marked by November 15, 1991. Registration fee of \$43 (\$50 Can.) per person will hold your place. Remainder due March 31, 1992.

**Cost:** (With discounts applied) \$135 (\$159 Can.) per person for food, lodging and program. \$91 (\$107 Can.) per person for food, lodge use fee, and program for campers (camping charges extra).

### Accommodations

Pioneer Chehalis Lodge is located in a beautiful wooded setting beside a river, one and one-half hours east of Vancouver, British Columbia. A vast dining room looking out onto river and mountains through floor to ceiling windows seats 120 with space for lounging around a great stone fireplace. Sleeping accommodations is bunk-house style with 4 to 10 persons per room. Each room has its own bathroom.

### Transportation

Shuttle service to the camp can be arranged at nominal charge on request until 12 noon on May 8 from Seattle airport and until 4 PM on May 8 from Vancouver airport.

### Child Care

To get the most out of this intensive program, consider attending without children. If, however, you are bringing the family, child care will be provided. Cost for children (with discounts applied) is \$63 (\$74 Can.) per child age 3 to 11 for food, lodging and child care. \$46 (\$54 Can.) per child for food and child care for campers (camping charges extra).

### Sponsors: COMPANIONS ON THE WAY

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of people when they begin to contemplate forgiveness. Often I hear people try to reconcile Jesus admonishments to forgive and to refrain from judgment with the group necessity to judge and take action against certain of its members. Jesus' statements about mercy, not judging and forgiving were all primarily statements to the individual about his relationships with other individuals.

Society, indeed any group, has the right to keep order in accord with the group will. Jesus' instructions to forgive did not mean that society should allow criminals to return to the streets to abuse honest citizens. Society has the right to decide when the group should be protected against an individual because of his own acts.

Groups within society also have

a right to make their own internal rules and require that members abide by these standards. So long as disputes are handled in fairness and judgments made by group action instead of individual action, groups are justified in judging a member and even expelling him or her. Justice is the function of the group. Forgiveness is the attitude of the individual for another individual. -



# Courage

The Spring-Summer 1992 issue of *The Circles* will have as its theme "Courage." Join us in an exploration of this fruit of the spirit. To help start your thinking:

**What is courage?** "The spirit of courage—the fidelity endowment..." (402:2/36.5.5)  
"...courage—strength of character..." (51:4/3.5.5)

**What kinds of courage exist?** "The courage of the flesh is the lowest form of bravery. Mind bravery is a higher type of human courage, but the highest and supreme is uncompromising loyalty to the enlightened convictions of profound spiritual realities. (1608:4/143.1.7)

**How do we acquire courage?** "Is courage—strength of character—desireable? Then must man be reared in an environment which necessitates grappling with hardships and reacting to disappointments." (51:4/3.5.5) "And this interchange of strength for weakness, courage for fear, the will of God for the mind of self, constitutes worship." (1777:3/160.3.1)

**Do we have help?** "If you will maintain this living spiritual connection with me, you will bear abundant fruit. (1945:5/180.2.1) "...as you work and worry, as you fight and toil—permit the valiant Adjuster to fight with you and for you." (1223:5/111.7.2)

**How did Jesus portray courage?** "But his courage was linked with discretion and controlled by reason. It was courage born of faith, not the recklessness of blind presumption." (1103:2/100.7.14)

**What was Jesus' message of courage and the kingdom?** "Cease your useless yearning and go forth bravely doing that which concerns the establishment of the kingdom." (1725:5/155.1.3)

Send your article, poem or artwork by December 15, 1991 to:  
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Page 20 *The Circles* • Fall 1991

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