



I HAVE THE POWER TO FORGIVE!

On August 13, 1986, Michael Morton received the heartbreaking news that his wife had been murdered in her own bed while his 3-year-old son was in the house. Despair gave way to disbelief when in the midst of his grief, Morton suddenly found himself the prime suspect. Six weeks later, despite his innocence, he sat in jail awaiting trial. In the months and years that followed, the media ran his reputation through the mud. Key evidence was overlooked, including the testimony about the “monster” his son saw in the house, while a laser-focus was put on Morton as the *only* suspect.

Nearly every “friend” abandoned him. He spent every penny he had trying to clear his name but to no avail. He was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. Perhaps worst of all, his son would grow up convinced of the narrative that his father killed his mother. For 14 years, Morton sat angry and bitter until he hit rock bottom and cried out to God. Then, a glowing light filled his cell as peace enveloped his heart. Just then, God asked the unthinkable: to *forgive* the people who maligned his name and put him in chains. Though the process took time and was messy, he remembers the day when his heart fully released his accusers to God — true freedom inside prison bars. Morton would spend almost 25 years locked up until DNA from a bandana that had been in an evidence bin all along would prove his innocence beyond all doubt. Today, Morton travels the country to share with others the power of *forgiveness*.

“I feel like I get it now. I understand suffering and unfairness. I can’t think of anything better to receive . . . And I know three little simple things because of that. One, God exists. Two, he is wise. He’s smarter than I am. And three, he loves me. If you know those three things, what’s your problem?” - Michael Morton, *An Unreal Dream*

Like Michael Morton, you’ve likely had people hurt you, accuse you, spread lies about you or believe the worst of you. Maybe you’ve gone through abuse, financial turmoil or emotional trauma at the hands of another. It can be easy to shut down, build walls and close out the world. But when we come to Jesus, we’ve been forgiven of so much and given the *gift* of forgiveness. It may sound crazy to you, but being able to forgive others is actually a gift, not another set of chains to live under. By the power of his Holy Spirit, we can actually walk through forgiveness victoriously, despite the messy process, and release those who have wronged us. We can find peace in places war broke out against us. We can experience healing where others afflicted us. We don’t have to live under what was done to us anymore. God is on the throne. He saw everything that happened, and he *promises* to take care of it. He will. But when you forgive like Michael Morton did, you find it is *you* who is set free!

“ ‘Lord, how many times shall I *forgive* my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times’ ” Matthew 18:21-22 – Emphasis added.

“Bear with each other and *forgive* one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. *Forgive as the Lord forgave you*” Colossians 3:13 – Emphasis added.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. *Read and declare Psalm 91 over your life today.*
2. *Get in a quiet place and ask the Lord to reveal to you anyone you presently need to forgive. Consider anyone you feel resentment, anger or judgment toward. Begin to walk through the process of forgiving them. For additional help, see “Unforgiveness” in Appendix 5 in ‘Life in the Overflow.’*

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for the amazing gift of forgiveness – both your forgiveness of me and the power to forgive those who have wronged me. I want to know and experience all of your peace, and I choose not to allow bitterness or resentment to have a place in my heart. I give you my burdens and release those who have wronged me to you (share each person and offense before the Lord). You have seen everything, and I trust you to be my shelter and provide all of my needs. I give it to you. Return all that has been stolen and surround me with your blessings. Thank you for loving and protecting me.

LISTENING TIME:

Stop for a few minutes and ask the Lord what he wants to say to you. He might bring to mind a picture, a word, a song, an encouragement, a Scripture or an answer to a burden in your heart. Don’t rush or feel pressure to figure out the meaning of your impressions. Just invite him to speak and draw or write down what you sense. Afterward, ask God to help you discern and understand what he is saying to you. You might want to ask other trusted friends in the Kingdom for their input as well.

USE THE FOLLOWING SPACE TO RECORD WHAT GOD IS SAYING



TOOLS FOR FAMILY DEVOTIONS:

Ask, “How would you feel if you were in Michael Morton’s shoes? How was he able to forgive?” Ask each person to share if there is anyone they need to forgive — even in the family. Remember that the process might be messy. That’s okay. Commit to staying connected in love to each other. Spend some time praying for one another!

TOOLS FOR PRAYING FOR OTHERS:

Pray for someone who is trapped under the bitterness of resentment or a victim mentality. Pray that God would open their eyes to the gift of forgiveness.