

Forgive ... not Seven Times, but Seventy–Seven Times

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**Forgive ... not Seven Times, but Seventy–Seven Times**

**By Susan Dunn**

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**Intelligence Coach and Consultant**

Yes, it was a difficult weekend. I had houseguests, and one of them has truly been wronged. Not once, but many times. Not by strangers, but by his own family. Not long ago, but long ago and recently.

It made me angry just to hear the stories, though he told them only as they related to the conversation at hand ("So what happened to your father's farm?" sort of thing), and there was no rancor on his part. Incredulously, he appears to have made his peace with some real injustices. But then that's one of the reasons we all love him so much.

My friend is very forgiving, and there's a reason why: he's had a lot of practice. Forgiveness is like another EQ competency, Resilience. The good news is you can learn it. The bad news is there will always be opportunity. And you can reverse those two!

So, yes, my friend is very forgiving. I imagine he has forgiven 77 times. If you're familiar with the Biblical passage: "Then Peter came and said to him, `Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, `Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy–seven times.'"

This forgiving friend of mine is of–an–age, and also a physician.

"How could you forgive him for that?" I asked him, about a particularly unjust occurrence.

"Because I want to live and preserve my health," he said.

Physicians know about emotions and health.

THE TWO WOLVES

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There's a story currently circulating the Internet about a Native American grandfather "whose eyes have seen too much," talking with his grandson. The boy was talking about an injustice that had happened that day that left him enraged.

The grandfather admitted that he, too, had felt such rage. "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart," he told the child. "One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one."

The grandfather said, "I too, at times, have felt a great hate for those who have taken so much with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die."

When he finished talking, the grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?"

"The one I feed," replied the grandfather.

[Go here [http://www.turtle-tracks.org/issue50/i50\\_3.html](http://www.turtle-tracks.org/issue50/i50_3.html) to read the whole story]

PACO...GIOVANNI...TON...SERGEI...ED, JR...JOHANN...PIERRE ... THEIR NAMES ARE LEGION

Ernest Hemingway wrote a story about forgiveness. It's the story of a Spanish father and his teenage son who are at odds, and eventually the strained relationship breaks. When Paco, the rebellious son, runs away from home, his father begins a long, grief–stricken search to find him and bring him back.

As a last resort, the exhausted father placed an ad in a Madrid newspaper, hoping his son would see the ad and respond to it. The ad read:

Dear Paco,  
Please meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon. All is forgiven.  
Love,  
Father

As Hemingway tells the story, the next day at noon, in front of the newspaper office, there are 800 Pacos, all seeking forgiveness from their fathers.

## HOW YOU PRESERVE YOUR HEALTH

We have all been wronged. I have been. You have been. Your father has been. The queen of England has been. No one escapes. Some of us have been egregiously wronged and live with rage ... for a week, a year, a lifetime. Our anger interferes with our ability to forgive.

And why, perhaps you are asking, should you forgive? There has been incest ... infidelity ... theft ... betrayal ... Certainly you're justified in your rancor after what's been done to you.

Frederick Buechner, theologian, writes: "Of the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To

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lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back - in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you."

We suffer when we're angry. It causes physiological reactions that damage our health, and drive others away, leaving us to fester in our own isolated hell. We also suffer because we feel guilty about being angry. And we may feel strangled because we can't act on it. It's a complicated emotion. It is, however, neither good nor bad in and of itself. Emotions just "are." They guide us. They tell us what to do.

Anger tells us there is danger and we need to deal with it directly. The problem develops when we have not learned Emotional Intelligence and don't know how to handle this anger. It can live forever in its raw state if not dealt with, undermining our health.

But what if ... What if the person who did this is dead? Or estranged, like Paco from his father? ... Or virulently poised to do more harm? Or an apology won't really do, as in "I'm sorry I was drunk for the first 15 years of your life"? Or "I'm sorry I had your father shot by a firing squad in front of your eyes?" What if they absolutely do not deserve our forgiveness? What do we do then?

Being adamantly and relentlessly self–forgiving is an EQ competency. At times it's even harder to forgive ourselves than it is to forgive others, and we stand in need as well.

While we are all Paco, we are all, also, his father. We create our own world, and as we refuse to forgive others, we refuse to allow others to forgive us. What goes around comes around.

Being forgiving - forgiving yourself and others - is highly recommended.

The person you're harboring the hatred for isn't likely to be affected by it, but you are which makes you twice the victim, and more the fool. You are demanding from them something they can't or won't give, and you therefore remain tied to them forever. They don't deserve you to forgive them, but you deserve to forgive them.

HELL

I'm reminded of Dante's "Inferno." In the fifth ring of hell live "the Wrathful." Says the commentary, "they spend their time here either tearing at each other in anger or ..." Yes, that's being in hell.

But even more fitting is the ninth and final circle of Hell, Cocytus, which is ice cold (those farthest from God's love). There we find those who betrayed those to whom they should forever have been faithful, those treacherous to kin, and the image is this — two people are frozen in the same hole so that one can gnaw at the nape of the other's neck. An apt metaphor for how we can gnaw at ourselves with resentment and anger.

To paraphrase Paul Pearsall, Ph.D., psychoneuroimmunologist, 'Go ahead and rant and rave, rage, beat your chest, fight! But to the victor goes the bypass.'

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For your own mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health, you must learn how to let it go. Work with a coach to develop your Emotional Intelligence. Anger directly affects our immunological system, which is our health, and it is an ongoing part of life for all of us. It's the price we pay for being human.

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Coaching, business programs, Internet courses, teleclasses, and ebooks around Emotional Intelligence for your wellness, success and happiness. [Mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc](mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc) for FREE ezine. Put "ezine" for subject line. Susan is the author of The EQ Foundation Course, <http://www.susandunn.cc/courses.htm> .

### **Love Never Fails**

**By Joyce C. Lock**

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"Father, forgive them;  
for they know not what they do."

Luke 23:24

How many times do you suppose we've hurt people and not realized it; to have reacted without thought; to have deemed another not ready, worthy, capable, or spiritual enough; to have picked our favorite over another; to have excluded one who didn't measure up; to sit by one more attractive, popular, or fun; to have been in such a hurry to greet one that we bypassed another; to have closed our heart to someone whose words we didn't want to hear; to think we've done God a favor by getting rid of someone we thought difficult, different, or wrong?

How many times do you suppose this prayer has been prayed for us, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do?"

Were we to ask God to open our eyes, to see ourselves as He sees us; to examine our heart, actions, attitudes, and motives ... God would be faithful to show us how we are hurting His cause.

Once we've found our sin and corrected it, we can ask God to show us another and, then, another. One step at a time, we'll be weeding out the flesh and Satan's power over us while winning the world to Christ.

Love never fails, I Co. 13:8. It's guaranteed!

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Joyce C. Lock is a published author, poet, and columnist. In addition, she founded and maintains the e–mail ministries "Heavenly Inspirations" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HeavenlyInspirations/> and "Share a Smile" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/smilesaring/>. Joyce's writings encourage us in our relationship with God and each other.



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