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August Celebrating Thirty Nine Years of Service 2016

Dear Friends,

Some years ago Debi saw a church sign that has given encouragement and power to my message at Alpha! It is:

*You will grow more in your spiritual life with  
5 minutes of obedience to God's Word  
then you will grow spiritually in  
5 years of Bible study!*

Of all the repeated problems I have seen, in over 30 years of counseling with Christians, lack of forgiveness is the one issue that seems to be the root of much of the pain and trouble in our lives. People learn about forgiving from Bible texts such as the 'Lord Prayer' which emphatically states "*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*". To Ephesians 4:31-32 "*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*"

I hear so many stories of grudges that have carried on in all levels of church life and we wonder why our churches are not attracting new people. The word malice is interesting in verse 31. Webster's Dictionary defines it as "the desire to inflict injury, harm, or suffering on another..." The Bible is very strong in its condemning gossip and one of the main purposes of gossip is to inflict harm on someone by talking behind their back. It's a cowards' way of inflicting harm and much of its driving force is an unforgiving heart. Know any malicious gossips in church or family?

I was a Christian and a pastor for too many years before I learned the power of forgiving others as God had forgiven me. Nothing would have changed in my life if I had learned and even taught the principles of biblical forgiveness but chose not to apply what I had learned. It was in the doing that brought healing and emotional health to me not just the knowing what I should do!

Thank you for praying for Debi and me and our work at Alpha,

*Richard*

## FORGIVENESS

Inventoried pain, stuffed away  
Piled on top of yesterday.  
Mementoes of life's weary road  
How much longer can I carry this  
load?

When we count our losses  
and move on to the next,  
Ignoring the fact our souls are vexed:  
Where does forgiveness come into  
play,

Reconciliation along the way?  
A pardon never says that it's okay!  
But I choose to forgive anyway!  
This daily act of my will, God requires  
of me!

If from my tormentors, I seek to be  
free  
It is almost like giving my vengeance  
away

To God, who says "I WILL REPAY"  
I have no choice, but to forgive  
If in peace I want to live  
Resting in Christ, he heals my heart  
And yet, He demands I do My part!  
Forgiveness is the Kings Highway  
To God's healing day by day  
Here Jesus walks along the road  
Here he even carries the load  
Take the keys from your tormentors!  
Let forgiveness have a voice!  
No other road to healing!  
My friend it is your choice!  
Author unknown.