

# Forgive



**M**Y FRIEND CARMEN received a letter from her son addressing her alcoholism. It's not easy to read such a letter even when it's written with sensitivity; real and deep issues surface, sparking emotions of anger, hurt, grief, and animosity. Carmen was overwhelmed with these emotions, especially feeling anger towards her son. A series of counseling sessions helped Carmen to come to grips, to some extent, with her alcoholism and emotions. Since then, on a couple of occasions, Carmen told me with intense anger: "I forgive him, but I will never forget." I sensed that her forgiveness wasn't heartfelt, and her comment reminded me of the Cayce readings' repeated counsel to forgive and forget the hurts and insults that we face.

Forgetting doesn't mean that we develop some sort of instant amnesia upon forgiving, but that our forgiveness is so heartfelt, so complete, that any past transgression is as good as forgotten. When Jesus set a child before the disciples and said, "unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3), He meant: "unless you can get mad and fight and then forgive and forget," (3395-3) you cannot enter the kingdom. It's human to fight but divine to forgive, and somewhere, sometime, we need to get on that road to

# Forget

BY JERRY LAZARUS, MA

divinity. Then, we will be tenderhearted as a child, whose natural disposition it is to forgive and forget.

Forgetting is part and parcel of forgiving—two sides of the same coin. A coin with only one side is not a legal tender, and will be rejected; so too is forgiving without forgetting.

Cayce pointed out to different individuals that, because they chose not to forget hurts, they were grappling with confusion, being burdened by the past, intolerance, and disagreements. All these individuals generally displayed the same attitude: "I'll forgive you but I won't forget it," "Yes, I will not remember but don't remind me of what you did." Cayce told them to "chuck it out," by forgiving and forgetting their resentments and filling their minds with the love of God. This will free them of their adverse patterns. Patience and tolerance are spiritual attributes worth striving for in their efforts to fully forgive.

"...As ye forgive, ye are forgiven. As ye love, so are ye loved.



## There are two vital aspects of forgiving: a willingness to forgive and the humility to ask others for forgiveness.

As ye resent, so are ye resented. This is *law*—physical, mental and *spiritual*! Then, chuck it out of thy life. Let the love of God so fill thy mind, thy body, that there is no resentment.” (2600-2)

### Willingness to Forgive

There are two vital aspects of forgiving: a willingness to forgive and the humility to ask others for forgiveness. Hesitancy and difficulty to do either or both are understandable and human. But the bridge to our divinity, at least in part, lies in our ability to do both.

We can expect to be forgiven only in proportion to our willingness to forgive—a truth well stated in the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” When Peter asked Jesus if he should forgive another’s trespasses seven times, Jesus answered: “Seventy times seven,” and shared a compelling story about forgiveness.

A man owed a king a large sum of money. The king ordered that the man and his family, along with his possessions, be sold to make the payment. The man begged the king to have mercy and give him time to repay. Moved by compassion, the king cancelled the debt. Later, the man confronted a fellow citizen who owed him a small amount of money, and he grabbed the fellow citizen by his throat, demanding that he pay what he owed. The fellow citizen’s plea—to have patience with him until he can repay—was met with contempt, and he was thrown in prison. Onlookers, grieved over the incident, reported all that they had witnessed to the king. Appalled by this incident, the king asked the man if he should not have shown the same mercifulness. And the king delivered him to the torturers until he repaid his debt. Jesus ended the story by saying that unless we forgive others, we cannot expect to be forgiven. (Matt. 18:21-35)

It makes no sense to seek God’s forgiveness only to turn around and hold a grudge—a concept the readings emphasized by repeating Jesus’ teaching: “... be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not

be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” (Luke 6:36-37) The question is not whether others have forgiven us or if God has forgiven us, but have we forgiven others? If we haven’t done our part, is it any wonder that sometimes we feel our prayers aren’t heard?

Forgiving is not easy; the greater the transgression, the greater the difficulty. Cayce recognized this difficulty and counseled a woman who found it hard to forgive that she “cannot bear the cross alone,” but she can pray to Christ who “stands ever to aid,” awakening in her “the ability to forgive those who have purposely wronged” her. (1435-1) Severe transgressions require greater strength and capacity to forgive. Through prayer and meditation, the Christ spirit awakens in us the necessary humility and willingness to forgive. Thus, we transform the transgressions we face into tremendous opportunities for soul growth.

### Seeking Forgiveness

In our earthly journey, sometimes antagonisms arise in us and, at other times, we face antagonisms. Such was the case of a woman who was counseled in the readings to show “forgiveness, more and more.” Cayce told her that when Jesus forgave the sins of a paralytic before healing him, Jesus forgot his weakness and gave him strength. And this is how she could meet others’ antagonisms—by forgiving and forgetting. (538-30) But what could she do with her own antagonisms? The answer is in the story of the paralytic.

Before healing the paralytic, Jesus said to him: “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” The scribes took exception to Jesus forgiving sins, as they considered this to be blasphemous and insisted that only God can forgive sins. Their focus was not on whether Jesus could heal, but on his claim to forgive sins. The scribes seemed to have missed the point: sins and diseases have a causal relationship; when the sins are forgiven, the disease is healed—as affirmed in the readings. (254-114, 2533-3, 3051-7) Jesus said to them: “... the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins.” And He promptly healed the paralytic by saying, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to

your house.” (Matthew 9:2-6)

Jesus healed the lame, the blind, the deaf, the mute, the lepers—a magnificent phenomenon He performed with ease, again and again, no matter the type of disease. Jesus healed adverse mental patterns as well—as in the case of “Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.” (Mark 16: 9; Luke 8:2) Though the Bible does not tell us what the demons are, Cayce does: “Avarice, hate, self-indulgence, and those of the kindred selfishness: hopelessness and blasphemy.” (295-8) These are manifestations of the innate creative energy, misapplied in different ways by everyone. Once forgiven and cleansed, Mary could choose to redirect the energy in constructive ways.

If death is the wages of sin, then Jesus’ ability to raise the dead shows His power to forgive sins, and His own resurrection proves He is without sin. (Romans 6:23) Not only can Christ grant us the ability and strength to forgive others, but He can forgive our transgressions. When Jesus said to the penitent thief on the cross, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise,” it was a gesture of forgiveness. (3309-1), (Luke 23:39-43) Therefore, the readings emphasize praying to Christ for forgiveness of our own antagonisms and transgressions.

### The Pattern

There’s no better example of forgiveness than Jesus’ sentiment on the cross: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” The readings state that if we practice this, we are putting on the mind of the Christ. However, it becomes of no effect if we say under our breath, “Poor saps! I’m the one persecuted but they are the ones that must receive the damnation.” 262-109, 1472-12 Herein lies the beauty of Cayce’s counsel: Just because we’re persecuted doesn’t mean that we’ve learned anything, unless we’ve applied some truth. To forgive without harboring ill will is to meet the condition well, making it a stepping stone in our soul development.

To learn the lesson of forgiveness, Cayce appealed to the conscience of an individual by asking: “Would you ask the Father to

hold a grudge against thee, or do you ask forgiveness daily?” (3299-1) Grace and mercy must supersede animosity, resentment, or bitterness as in the case of Jesus who forgave those who spitefully “used Him for fear of jealousy, hate, avarice, malice...” (2420-1) Jesus denounced the religious elite too loudly for their comfort. Driven by hatred, they subjected Him to the ignominious act of crucifixion, prefaced by scourging and thrusting a crown of thorns upon His head in a public display of mockery. Yet He held no malice. Why? Because He knew that whoever they are or whatever they have done, they are made in the image of God. (5103-1) Jesus magnified the godliness in others despite their shortcomings of the moment.

In St. Stephen, we find yet another example of someone who aptly displayed the spirit of forgiveness in the face of persecution. Having been anointed by the Holy Spirit, Stephen performed great wonders and signs among the people. An acrimonious group disputed with Stephen on religious matters, and unable to withstand the wisdom of Stephen’s spiritual reasoning, they found false witnesses against him and stirred up the people. They, in turn, brought him to the Sanhedrin (the Jewish council) and accused him of blasphemy. Addressing the council, Stephen gave a full account of the Jewish history, from Abraham to Jesus, then questioned their faith and sincerity to God, charged them with always resisting the Holy Spirit and persecuting and murdering many prophets and Jesus. In response, the hysterical mob stoned him. Just before he died, he said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” adding, “Lord, do not charge this against them.” Stephen wasn’t afraid of voicing his beliefs and calling the Sanhedrin on their shortcomings, yet he didn’t hold a grudge. (Acts 6, 7)

## Forgiving and Criticizing

Some insist—unknowingly or for personal motives—that when people criticize others, it shows a lack of forgiveness on their part. Such an assertion is usually supported by claiming: “the faults that you see in others are in yourself,” “see only the good in others,” and “don’t speak badly of others.” These types of statements are

found in the readings and all of them are true. However, generalizing them to every situation is simplistic and irresponsible. Some may even opportunistically use them as religious justification to deflect criticism. One reading says: “...helpful criticism is helpful to an individual. Criticism that is done in the spirit of criticism is not helpful. Criticism in the spirit of love may always be helpful.” (294-204) This is no small distinction. With such a spirit, we can justly speak out against or stand up to an individual or a view, an organization or a nation, that is unjust or discriminatory, illegal or corrupt—just as Jesus and Stephen did. The lives of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi come to mind as good examples from recent history.



Cayce often counseled, “Be angry but sin not,” quoting Paul. (Eph. 4:26) (2635-1) We have the example of Jesus who “found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business.

When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, ‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!’” (John 2:14-16) While we see Jesus chastising the moneychangers, he didn’t hold a grudge against them.

It’s easy to play it safe and be a “goody-goody,” which the readings cautioned against. We must be vigilant against complacency masquerading as forgiveness. We should “be good for something,” which is ennobling. (416-13)

## Forgiving and Condoning

Can forgiving have the unintended consequence of condoning wrongs? An act of forgiveness must not condone the wrongs nor condemn the wrongdoers. We are called to develop the ability to see the good even in those who spitefully use us because “there is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us...” (1120-3)

A powerful example of finding balance between condoning and condemning is demonstrated in Jesus’ encounter with Mary Magdalene. The scribes and

Pharisees found her in the act of adultery. Mary came running to Jesus as she was about to be subjected to one of the most grotesque forms of punishment: stoning to death. The scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus: “Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” Jesus replied, “He who is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Convicted by their own conscience, they left. Choosing a better way, Jesus forgave Mary and encouraged her to “sin no more.” (John 8:1-11) Jesus stood up to the accusers without hatred while neither condemning nor condoning Mary’s behavior. From that point on, this simple but wise act of mercy transformed Mary for the better. This whole event brilliantly captures Jesus’ magnanimity—a pattern worth emulating.

We must act against transgressions such as hazing, abuse, and discrimination to rightly defend ourselves and those who aren’t in a position to do so themselves, just as Jesus did for Mary Magdalene.

## The Higher Way

It’s one thing to know the laws (such as forgiveness) by rote, but quite another to have a true understanding. It’s best not to lean on our own understanding but on God, who has promised to give us the spirit and wisdom to apply truths. (Prov. 3:5-6 and 4:7)

We don’t always have to ask for forgiveness; we can take it a step further in our forgiveness journey, as suggested in the readings: “...it is much easier to refrain from error—in speech or in activity—than to seek forgiveness for the word quickly spoken.” (1669-1) The more we practice forgiveness, along with tolerance, patience, and kindness, the more we develop the ability to not err in the first place. And thus we take the high road, traveling with grace. 🌟

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JERRY LAZARUS, MA, is a spiritual counselor, author, and speaker. He has a master’s degree in religion and meditation, and leads lectures and workshops on meditation, dreams, and other topics. He is a speaker for A.R.E. conferences across the United States. His new book, *Dreams: Listening to the Voice of God*, is available at his Web site: [jerry Lazarus.com](http://jerry Lazarus.com)