

## SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

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orgiveness is a process that becomes a way of life. We must remember there are often several steps to forgiveness. We are transformed by moving through the various phases as we're able.

For your exercise this week, set aside a block of time to complete this reflection. You will need unhurried time to ponder what these steps mean for you, and what action you may need to take.

Begin with prayer. Invite God to accompany you in this process.

As you completed this study, did the face of someone who has wronged you come to mind? Is there anyone who provokes a flash of anger when you think of them? Call to mind a family member, coworker, neighbor, roommate, or anyone else who is close enough to you to wound you by their actions.

Be sure to be honest about how you feel—"This person really hurt me." It does no good to minimize what has been done to you, as if it didn't really cause pain (it did), or as if their actions were somehow justified or excusable (they probably weren't).

Now move toward empathy. Imagine this person as a person, not some monster who caused you terrible pain. Can you see their human limitations for what they are? How does God look at

the person? The purpose of this is not to excuse any action but to understand the humanity of the one who hurt you.

In “garden-variety” conflicts (in contrast to situations of abuse or trauma), there are usually two sides to the story. That may mean there is a piece of what happened that *you* need to own. It may be small, but it’s important you see your own contributions to what happened. What aspect of the situation can you acknowledge as your responsibility?

Finally, consider what you can do to act in loving and forgiving ways. You do not need to feel good, be fully reconciled, or even *like* the person to come up with something that evidences your willingness to give a “blessing instead of a curse.”

Remember, forgiveness is a process. You may have to return to this process many times along the way.

One final caveat. Deep hurts, especially from childhood or from sustained physical or emotional abuse, need additional steps in order to heal. What this exercise attempts to cover is the kind of bruising or conflict that is painful but not soul-crushing or life-threatening. If the wounds you suffer are deeper than what is described here, it would probably be a good idea to seek out the help of a Christian counselor who can help you walk through a more comprehensive process.











