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The Power of Forgiveness

There was a celebration for a couple's fiftieth wedding anniversary. Their nicknames were Gramps and Nanny. Everyone was excited; all the kids, grandchildren, great grandchildren and friends were there. It was quite the crowd. They all gathered around them and asked Gramps the secret of his success. He said, "I learned many years ago that if I just said the two words "Yes, dear" then our marriage was wonderful." After everyone laughed they asked Nanny the same question, and with her grey-haired wisdom she gave a thoughtful answer. She said, "I only have one word to share about our success, and it is key to a healthy relationship: forgiveness."

She went on to share with all of her family about how important it was to practice forgiving the people in their lives. She then went beyond her marriage and took the opportunity to share her wisdom on the importance of forgiving others in their everyday lives. She said, "Every one of you will experience hard things, mean things and even wrong things, being done and spoken to you. There is really no way around being hurt so it is important to learn how to practice forgiving people from their wrongs."

She explained that this was not only for the sake of others but also necessary for their own health, as unforgiveness is like a poison that will spread through every part of your life. She showed them a faded picture of her, and some friends on the beach, when she was young, and shared how she could still smell the ocean when she thinks about it and can remember smiling when it was taken.

Nanny explained how this was a wonderful memory of a moment in her past but that there were also hurtful moments that she had experienced. "When you don't forgive a person, then you and the person who hurt you are both trapped in that moment of time. It's as if a photo is taken of that moment, and you relive it over and over again, trapped inside an old picture while life moves on around you."

Then with all of the little children looking on and listening this great grandma opened up her Bible, and slowly turned the pages, and read out loud the verses from Luke 6:36-38 which says, *"Therefore 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. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*

"Practicing forgiveness is a very important practice", she said. "I know that people can really hurt each other and I know that we can do it by accident and also on purpose. I have hurt people in my past, and have also been hurt. I also know some who have been truly damaged by some very bad experiences, and who deserve justice, but sometimes we must learn to forgive without seeking justice." Each of us have received forgiveness from God for all of our sins, with the justice being placed on Jesus, and this is why God can ask us to forgive those who hurt us, even if there is no repentance.

"But Nanny", asked one of them, "What if the other person doesn't ask you to forgive them and they do

not acknowledge their part of causing damage?" She answered by saying, "Even though we may desperately desire to have them come to a place of humility and feel remorse, that doesn't always happen, and it is still very important that we forgive them."

"The power for us to forgive does not come from our own ability and neither does it come from the other person repenting for what they've done. When people hurt other people, it's because they don't understand the love that God has for them. The gift of forgiveness will also help the other person experience the love that Christ has for them through you."

"The power to forgive others must come from a personal revelation of God's forgiveness towards ourselves. When we truly accept His unconditional love towards our own lives, then we should pass that same love to others. Jesus told his disciples in John 20:23, *"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."* They may seem unworthy, but truthfully we also are unworthy of God's love and mercy!"

"It is from this position of accepting forgiveness for ourselves that we forgive a person who has hurt us. When we grant forgiveness from our heart, it gives God the faith necessary to help the other person. God's grace is then released through our actions to bring healing from the past."

Nanny shared that If you have a hard time forgiving then you must decide to trust God's Word over your feelings, and even though you may not feel like it is working, it is. "Everyday," she said, "and every time those feelings of hurt rise up, it is important to declare in the name of Jesus, 'I don't accept these feelings! I am whole and healed! I forgive them and God forgives them in Jesus Name!'" No matter how long it takes, don't stop because the healing and freedom from the past will always follow forgiveness!"

My many decisions to forgive during my own lifetime have allowed me to continually move forward with the things of God, and to be free from weight and snares that could have captured me. I've had to forgive others and had to forgive myself. To be honest, for some, it took more time than I expected for my emotions to line up with the Word of God. We will always win over our hurts if we stand strong on forgiveness.

I don't know how you might feel, but I have discovered that Grandmas sometimes have greater wisdom than preachers do. Especially when it includes the Word of God! I know that many of us have been wounded and hurt by others, and may have done some wounding ourselves. But God's heart is for all of us to move past those old photos and to move forward in His Love and His Grace. There is power in forgiveness.

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