

Go From Persecuted to Blessing With These 4 Words

The most life-changing, light-bulb moment I've ever had regarding forgiveness occurred when I least expected it. I was sick and tired of carrying around disgusting feelings and age-old resentment. I needed help to let go without waking up the next day realizing I was still mad. On this day, I realized that forgiveness isn't just a choice, it's a miracle.

Forgiveness is a tough pill to swallow, any day of the week. Jesus knew that when He corrected Peter's math, telling him to forgive "seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22). How does someone forgive that many times? I love it when God sets the bar so high it's impossible for anyone to clear it.

In my book *Untangled*, I journal the road I traveled as a kid, growing up in a home with alcoholics. What warms my heart today is never once has a reader felt sorry for me. I believe that's because at the end of the day, God did for me what I couldn't do for myself. I was not only able to forgive the ones who harmed me, but over time I've earnestly prayed for their salvation and healing—their freedom. One by one, I've watched God infiltrate their lives.

How did I go from "persecuted" to "blessing my enemies"? Four little words define the answer: I can't. God can.

I was missing a puzzle piece in the process of forgiveness. I think the first thing I had to do was admit that I liked being angry with them. The anger made me feel powerful. Without it, I just felt weak. I re-read what Jesus said to Peter and tried to break the secret code of forgiving "seventy times seven." Then I made a list of everything I could remember that hurt, wrote the reason it hurt and then tried to articulate how it was hurting me today. When finished, I felt more defeated than

ever and as I prayed to God for help, I felt Him say, "It's a miracle, Michele. You can't do this, but I can. I did it first. I did it completely when I died for you and every one of your family members." Once I soaked that in, I kept asking God, "What happens now?"

I felt God's presence, and He guided me as I quietly mourned the losses. Then these words spilled from my lips, "Lord, I thank You for the miracle of forgiveness. I thank You for the miracle that raised You from the dead. And I ask You for the miracle of forgiveness for each thing on my list. I need to be raised from these dead places in my life, just like You were."

When I stopped white-knuckling forgiveness and sincerely asked for a miracle to do so, it stuck. Not all at once, but it stuck. Today, I can't remember much of what was on my list.

After forgiving my mother, she came to know the Lord. I never told her I had forgiven her. I didn't need to. I believe with all my heart that a pathway between her heart and mine opened. She could finally hear about God's forgiveness for her, but only after I'd forgiven her. She passed away two years later.

Forgiveness isn't just about me. It's about what God will do through me *after* I've forgiven. It's more than complex; it's a miracle. And that's the power of forgiveness. {eo}

Michele Pillar entered the music industry through Contemporary Christian Radio in 1979 when she sang "Thou Art Worthy" on The Praise II record for Maranatha! Music. She has since earned three Grammy Award and Dove nominations and total sales of 1.5 million. Michele is the author of *Untangled: The Truth Will Set You Free* (BroadStreet Publishing Group, Racine, WI).