

How Can You Truly Forgive Your Abuser?

"Your grandfather died at 10:10 p.m.," the text read. It was 3:45 a.m. and I'd just woken up to go to my Friday 4:00 a.m. adoration hour. I felt nothing. I reread the text in the bathroom and still felt nothing. Mechanically I dressed and headed to adoration.

When I arrived I saw two vehicles in the parking lot, the truck that belonged to the man who has the hour before me and the other car belonged to the older gentleman who comes in every morning to say a rosary. Interesting fact, he was in the navy, as was my grandfather, and every time I see him I've wondered if they could have maybe been on the same ship. They are the same age. When I saw his car I thought to myself, "God, I really don't want to find out this man was buddies with my grandfather."

In the chapel I knelt to pray and I had no words. Instead I asked God to seep through me in any way possible. I remembered, then, that the other couple that has the hour with me was not going to be there and the older gentleman who was praying the rosary usually comes at 4:30 a.m. but he was already done and within a few minutes walking out the door. I had the chapel *alone* for the entire hour.

I allowed my thoughts to go wherever they needed and then finally pulled out the book I'd been sent by an author, Charles F. Fink, who'd contacted me last week. It's called *As We Forgive Those*.

Two paragraphs in I knew God's hand was all over this day. Pen in hand I was marking, underlining, starring sections and nodding my head in agreement and understanding. This book was about forgiveness but in a light that I needed to embrace. For

example, Fink says:

“Understanding is used too often as a convenient means to avoid and sidestep the process of acknowledging the hurts and wounds (which makes forgiving more effective). **We cannot truly forgive until we admit that the offense is as wounding as it really is**, and therefore really does need to be forgiven. When understanding becomes the substitute not only for forgiving but for sharing about feelings, healing does not occur” (emphasis added).

BAM! Right there in black and white this man was calling me out and I was listening. There is so much more that this book has to offer but I was only able to get up to Chapter Two so far ... I’m certain you will be hearing more of my “revelations” as I continue to read.

However, this resonated through the day as I spoke with my mother, who expressed her lack of desire to attend her father’s funeral. The first of his “victims” (or that we know of as his “first”), she received her closure long ago. My older sister, yet another victim, displayed mixed emotions, remembering the funny, charismatic side of my grandfather that was the “good” side of his character and yet can’t erase the ugly.

“I cried,” she said. “But I don’t need to go. I received closure when I went to grandmother’s funeral and confronted him. He admitted what he did to me but didn’t apologize.”

My younger sister was indifferent altogether when he chose to write us all off when my mother “came out” and released the skeletons from the closet.

Me? Well I sat for most of the day trying to rationalize why I had this deep-seated need to go to this man’s funeral. Not necessarily for him but for me. Neal didn’t understand, worried for me and for my true intentions. He didn’t get it.

He supports me if I go but is simply worried. Surprisingly it's my younger sister's friend, Heather, who "gets it." She offered to go with me because she doesn't think I should be alone.

My friends expressed their love and concern telling me to pray and God would reveal what I should do. And that is what I did. Would you know that I received a phone call from Dr. 'C' who is over the Right to Life for our Archdiocese to talk about the Maria Goretti Network. In this phone conversation, once we dealt with the 'business' aspect, we were talking about the people we work with, the raw emotions, the need for healing, etc.

"May I ask you a personal question?" I said.

"Yes, of course," she replied.

And so I told her about what has been going on with me over these last few months and how my grandfather passed away last night.

"Oh," she said, "I bet you feel the need to go and put the final nail in the coffin so to speak?"

This rush of peace swept over me. "Yes! exactly. I don't know why, but I feel like I need to go."

"Of course," she said. "You haven't seen or heard from him in years and especially since all your memories came back. You need to go and see that he is dead. Pray and say what you need to say and leave. That's it."

There it was, my answer and my validation. So I took Heather up on her offer. One catch with Heather ... she doesn't fly. So we will be driving to New Mexico and we are going to take my little 6-month-old nephew, Riley, per my request. What a better way to end this "Sexual Assault Awareness and Childhood Abuse Awareness Month" don't you think? You won't want to miss

those blogs!

It is a crazy situation but the purpose is for healing and forgiveness.

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