

Pray for Those Who Hurt You

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. —Matthew 5:44

Total forgiveness involves praying for God's blessings to rain on the lives of your offenders. When you do this as Jesus intends it, you are being set free indeed.

To truly pray for the one who hurt you means to pray that they will be blessed, that God will show favor to them rather than punish them, and they will prosper in every way. In other words, you pray that they will be dealt with as you want God to deal with you. You don't pray, "God, deal with them." You don't pray, "Lord, get them for what they did to me." And neither is it enough to say, "Father, I commend them to You." That's a cop-out. You must pray that they receive total forgiveness, just as you want it for yourself.

To me the greatest inspiration to live in this manner is found in the life—and death—of Stephen. He is one of my heroes. When I read Acts 6:8-15 and consider the Holy Spirit's touch on his life, his enemies' inability to contradict his wisdom, the miracles he did, and his radiant countenance, I say to myself, I'd give anything in the world for that kind of anointing. His secret, however, emerged at the end of his life. While his enemies threw stones at him, he prayed—seconds before his last breath—"Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60). And therein lies the secret to his unusual anointing.

I must add one caution: Never go to a person you have had to forgive and say, "I forgive you." This will be counterproductive every time unless it is to a person that you know is yearning for you to forgive them. Otherwise, you will create a stir with which you will not be able to cope. They will say to you, "For what?" It is my experience that nine out of ten people I have had to forgive sincerely do not feel they

have done anything wrong. It is up to me to forgive them from my heart—and then keep quiet about it.

Excerpted from *Total Forgiveness* (Charisma House, 2002).