

John Wimber: The One Thing That May Stand Between You and Your Healing

One of the classic books on the healing ministry was written by John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard Church. It is called *Power Healing*.

A story from his book has remained especially prominent in my mind over the years because it speaks to John's theme that Jesus heals the whole person.

John described talking to a woman in her late 40s who came to him for prayer in order to be healed. She had arthritis and ongoing stomach disorders.

John related that as he prayed for her, he had the impression that she was bitter about something. He asked her if she felt resentment, anger or offense at someone, and John asked if the person might be her sister.

The woman denied having any problem with anyone, especially her sister, at first. She told John she had not seen her sister for 16 years.

But as John gently pressed in to the situation, the woman admitted that her sister had taken away the man she loved, married him, and later divorced him. She told John, "I have never forgiven her for that."

John wrote in the book that his answer was, "If you don't forgive her, your 'bones will waste away' just as David complained his did when he kept silent about his sin of adultery with Bathsheba."

The woman was convinced by John's counsel that unforgiveness could be linked to her physical suffering. She asked him,

"What should I do?"

John advised her to write a letter to her sister forgiving her and ask for them to renew their relationship. The woman wrote the letter but did not mail it for a number of weeks. As she hesitated, her symptoms grew worse, until "she thought she was going to die."

At that point, she thought about her letter of reconciliation and decided it must be mailed. It was difficult to even get up and go to the post office by then, but she did it. She later related that the very moment she dropped the letter in the mailbox, she began to feel better. By the time she reached home, she was completely healed.

As a pastor who helps people to find healing for soul wounds, I am amazed by how often we all neglect Jesus' teachings on forgiveness. Actually, I should rephrase this: I am amazed by how often we all neglect Jesus' *command* to practice forgiveness.

Far too often we justify staying wary, resentful, anger-filled, gossipy and distant from others. "If you only knew what they did to me, you would know how right I am in remaining in this rigid posture toward them!" we tell ourselves and others.

But the end result is often that we find ourselves literally sickened by our own bitterness. And like the woman described above, we also may delude ourselves that we're not bitter just because we're not in contact with the person anymore.

Now, many will respond to the idea of forgiving all who offend us with one of the teachings of Jesus where He said, "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them" (Luke 17:3-4, NIV). They will say, "If someone does not repent, I'm not required to forgive."

However, Jesus said much more than that, didn't He? He told us to "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28, NIV). He also said, "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matt. 6:14-15, NIV).

It couldn't be any clearer than that. We have no justification for hanging on to anger. In fact, the apostle Paul wrote about how we should handle our anger. His words were, "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:26-27, NIV).

I know as some read this, they may be doing so with memories of horrible wrongs or abuses in their lives. There may be trauma from having been hurt so badly by someone or ones. For them, the thought of forgiving their tormentor may seem impossible. But even horrible abuse or the murder of a loved one can – in the power of the Spirit of Christ – be forgiven. And as we forgive, we are released from a prison that has caged us. And we may find that a physical illness is healed as our souls are healed.

Many years ago, a pastor, Rev. Walter H. Everett, wrote an article called "Forgiving the Man Who Killed My Son" in *Decision* magazine.

He described the murder of his son by another young man who, with a plea bargain, got a reduced sentence. Rev. Everett burned with rage against the man, Mike, who killed his son, Scott. But in a court sentencing appearance, Mike expressed his deep sorrow for what he had done.

This began a change in Rev. Everett's heart. He wrote Mike and told him of his anger and asked him some questions, but he ended with, "Despite all that, I want to thank you for what

you said in court, and as hard as these words are for me to write, I forgive you.”

Mike, in turn, receiving forgiveness, gave his life to Christ. The two men began to write regularly, and Rev. Everett began visiting Mike. Both men were growing in Christ. Ultimately, Rev. Everett officiated at Mike’s wedding after Mike was released from prison. But Mike expressed that he had already gotten out of prison when he was forgiven.

These two men reconciled. That is not always possible to do, but nevertheless, we must obey Jesus and practice forgiveness in our hearts.

Can we forgive the worst things possible? By the power of the Spirit, we can. Is it for our good? Yes, absolutely. And might it be the key to transforming the world around us in the days ahead as we hope for yet another Awakening? Forgiveness *will* be key to sparking the next wave of revival. {eo}

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