



WEEKLY BOOK #3

The Weight You Can Finally Put Down

*Stories and words about forgiveness — toward
others and toward yourself*

Written by José Martínez · Powered by AI



*For the one who still carries something almost
no one else can see,
and quietly wonders if they'll ever be able to put
it down.*

“The Weight You Can Finally Put Down”

Weekly Book #3 by Godlives

Stories and words about forgiveness — toward others and toward
yourself.

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Prologue

Last week we talked about turning down the volume to hear a gentle voice in the middle of the noise. If you read it, maybe you already tried it: a couple of minutes of silence, a pause before responding, one night without a screen. I hope it helped you, even just a little.

But there's a kind of noise that silence doesn't switch off so easily. It's the noise made, on the inside, by something that happened long ago and that we keep carrying as if it had just happened: a betrayal, a word that should never have been said to us, an absence that left us alone right when we needed someone most. Or, sometimes, the loudest noise of all is the one we make ourselves, reminding us of a mistake we made and can't seem to let go of.

That's why this week I want to talk to you about forgiveness. And I want to start by telling you what this book is **not** going to do: it's not going to tell you “just forgive and move on,” as if it were a switch you could flip on and off. It's not going to tell you that if something still weighs on you, it's because you

lack faith, or because you're a bad person, or because you don't pray enough. None of that is true, and in this house, we don't say things like that.

What I am going to do is tell you five ancient stories — about people who betrayed others, who were betrayed, who made terrible mistakes and had to learn to look themselves in the eye again — alongside stories from today, about real people who each decided, in their own way and their own time, to put down a weight they had been carrying. None of them will tell you that forgiving erases what happened. All of them will show you that there's a way to carry less, without having to pretend it never weighed anything at all.

God, the Eternal One, the Creator — call Him whatever you want — isn't standing over you with a stopwatch, timing how long it takes you to forgive. Neither am I. I just want to walk with you as you look straight at something that, very likely, still weighs on you.

With all my appreciation,



José Martínez

A Letter to the Reader

Before we begin, I want to be very clear with you about a few things, because forgiveness is one of those subjects that's been misused the most — even from the very place I come from, faith.

Forgiving is not the same as reconciling. You can forgive someone and decide, with complete peace of mind, that this person will never again be part of your life. Forgiving is not the same as forgetting: the memory of what happened can stay with you; what changes, if the process moves forward, is the weight that memory carries over you today. Forgiving is not excusing or minimizing, either: it doesn't say “it wasn't that bad,” it says “I recognize exactly what happened, and I decide what I do with that from now on.” And here's something I want to underline as strongly as I can: forgiving is never the same as tolerating ongoing harm. You can forgive something from the past and, at the same time, set a boundary, step away, or ask for help with something that is still happening in the present. Both things can coexist without contradicting each other.

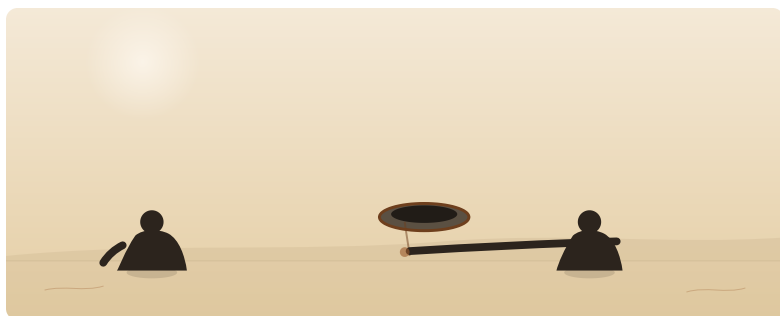
I'm not going to promise you a result, either. I'm not going to tell you “forgive and you'll feel better right away,” because that isn't true, and promising it would just be pressure disguised as comfort. Forgiveness, when it really happens, usually isn't a single event but a process with advances and setbacks: you can feel like you've already let something go, and then, months later, have that pain resurface with an anniversary or a memory. That's not a failure on your part. It's simply how deep wounds work.

You're going to read five ancient stories: one about a man betrayed by his own brothers, one about a servant who couldn't let go of a debt, one about a father with two sons — one who left and one who stayed behind, resentful — one about someone who forgave in the middle of the greatest pain imaginable, and one about a man who had to learn to forgive himself after failing badly. Alongside each one, a story from today: real people who decided, in their own way, to put down a weight.

BEFORE WE CONTINUE

If what you're carrying has to do with a deep betrayal, abuse, or violence you lived through, I want to tell you now, and you'll read it again later: this book does not replace the guidance of a mental health professional. Seeking that help is an act of courage, not a lack of faith. Your safety and your process always come first.

Let's begin, then. Slowly.



CHAPTER 1

Before the Embrace, There Was a Test

Have you ever had to decide, after a long time, whether it was worth trusting again someone who had truly hurt you? I don't mean a passing argument. I mean something big: a betrayal that changed your life, done by someone who was supposed to look out for you. If you've ever felt that strange mix of wanting to forgive and, at the same time, not knowing whether it's safe to get close again, this story is for you.

Joseph was seventeen years old when his own brothers seized him, threw him into a cistern, and then sold him as a slave to a caravan headed for Egypt. All out of envy: their father favored him, and they couldn't stand it. Joseph went from being the favorite son to being another man's property,

in another country, with no one he knew around him. Then came prison, unjustly, on a false accusation. Whole years at rock bottom, in silence, rebuilding himself from nothing.

And yet, with time, Joseph rose to become the second most powerful man in all of Egypt. When a terrible famine struck the region, his brothers — not recognizing him, since more than twenty years had passed — traveled there to buy grain, and ended up standing before him without knowing it.

Here's the detail almost no one mentions when they retell this story: Joseph did not forgive them right away. He put them through tests. He accused them of being spies. He held one of them hostage. He had a servant hide a silver cup in the sack of the youngest brother, Benjamin, just to see how the others would react. Only when he saw that one of them, Judah, was willing to offer himself as a slave to protect Benjamin — the very kind of sacrifice they had never made for him — did Joseph break down and reveal himself:

“I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.” (Genesis 45:4-5, NIV)

Notice that Joseph doesn't say “nothing happened” or “I already forgot about it.” He names exactly what they did — “the one you sold” — without softening it. And years later, when their father had died and the brothers, afraid that Joseph would now take revenge with no one left to protect them, threw themselves down before him, begging for forgiveness, Joseph answered with something that sums up this whole chapter:

“But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'” (Genesis 50:19-20, NIV)

That phrase — “God intended it for good” — gets quoted constantly, almost always out of context, to tell someone in the middle of great pain that “everything happens for a reason.” I'm not going to tell you that. Notice who says that phrase, and when: Joseph says it, the victim himself, many years later, from a place of complete safety, with power, with a life rebuilt. No one said it to him while he was at the bottom of the cistern, or while he was in prison. That way of looking back at what happened was his own, late, reading of events, made from a place of safety — not something a stranger has the right to impose on someone who is still suffering.

Almost fifty years after surviving Auschwitz, Eva Kor — who, together with her twin sister Miriam, had been part of Dr. Josef Mengele's medical experiments — made a decision that surprised even other survivors: in 1995, during a ceremony marking the anniversary of the camp's liberation, she publicly signed a document of forgiveness and shook hands with Hans Münch, a former SS doctor who had worked at Auschwitz. She did not do it on anyone else's behalf, and she said it many times over: “I forgive, not because they deserve it, but because I deserve it.” Her decision sparked a fierce debate among other survivors, some of whom felt her public gesture could sound as if she were speaking for all of them. Until her death in 2019, she insisted it was a personal decision, an act of liberation for herself, and that she never meant to suggest any other survivor had to do the same. She founded the CANDLES Museum in Terre Haute, Indiana, dedicated to the memory of the Auschwitz twins.

Like Joseph, Eva Kor forgave from a place of safety, decades later, as a decision entirely her own — not something anyone had the right to demand of her. And neither Joseph nor she ever said that what happened was okay, or that you have to trust again the person who hurt you. Forgiving doesn't require you to trust right away: you can let go of something from the past and still protect yourself, set conditions, guard your space — just as Joseph did before revealing himself.

I can forgive without having to trust right away.

THE WORD

Genesis 45:4-5 (NIV) and 50:19-20 (NIV)

TO REFLECT ON

- Is there someone you've forgiven inside, but with whom you still don't feel ready to trust again? Is it okay if that's how it is?
 - Has anyone ever told you “everything happens for a reason” while you were still in the middle of the pain? What would have helped you to hear instead?
-



CHAPTER 2

The Debt That Weighs the Most

Have you ever kept, inside yourself, an exact tally of how much someone owes you? Not in money, but in something harder to measure: how many times they let you down, how many apologies you never got, how much time you lost waiting for a repair that never came. If you still carry that tally with you, as clear as if you'd written it down yesterday, this story is going to hurt a little — and I hope it brings you some relief, too.

One day, Peter asked Jesus a question that, by the standards of the time, was already generous: the teachers of the law usually taught that you had to forgive up to three times. Peter proposed double that, plus one:

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'” (Matthew 18:21-22, NIV)

I want to pause here for a second, because this is probably the passage that has been most misused in the entire history of Christianity. “Seventy-seven times” — or “seventy times seven,” depending on how the original Greek is translated — isn't a number meant to be counted on your fingers. It's an ancient way of saying “without limit,” “as much willingness as you have in you.” And it's no coincidence: in the book of Genesis, a man named Lamech had said that if Cain was avenged seven times, he himself would be avenged “seventy-seven times.” Jesus takes that very same expression and turns it completely on its head: where there used to be a formula for limitless revenge, he now proposes a limitless willingness to let go.

After the question, Jesus tells a story: a servant owed his king an amount impossible to repay in several lifetimes, and the king, moved with compassion, forgave the entire debt. That same servant, minutes later, ran into a fellow servant who owed him a much smaller amount, and had him thrown into prison for not being able to pay. When the king found out, he said to him:

“You wicked servant,’ he said. ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’” (Matthew 18:32-33, NIV)

There's an important detail that almost never gets mentioned: this teaching comes right after Jesus explains how to resolve a conflict within a community — talk to the person alone first, then bring witnesses, and if they still won't acknowledge the wrong, treat them differently. In other words: the context itself already allows for forgiveness to coexist with boundaries, with processes, even with distance. The story of the servant is about releasing a debt that already happened, something from the past that can't be changed. It isn't about staying exposed to someone who keeps hurting you today.

A NECESSARY BOUNDARY

If you're in a relationship where the harm is still actively happening — abuse, control, any form of mistreatment — “seventy times seven” does not mean you have to stay. Forgiving something from the past is never an authorization for the harm to continue. Setting a boundary, walking away, or seeking professional help for something that is hurting you right now is a healthy decision, not a failure to forgive.

In 1947, two years after being freed from the Ravensbrück concentration camp — where her sister Betsie died, and where she herself endured terrible conditions — Corrie ten Boom was speaking at a church in Munich about God's forgiveness. When she finished, a man approached her,

smiling, holding out his hand. She recognized him immediately: he had been one of the cruelest guards at the camp. The man told her he had converted to Christianity and asked her forgiveness. She herself later recounted, in her book *The Hiding Place* and in several later writings, that in that instant she felt absolutely no forgiveness inside her — only the cold weight of everything she had suffered. Even so, she decided to reach out her hand. And she recounted that, in doing so, something changed: the willingness came first, as a decision, and the feeling of relief arrived afterward, almost as a surprise to her.

Notice that Corrie ten Boom's story isn't about staying close to someone who keeps doing harm: that man was no longer a guard at any camp, he had changed his life, and he was asking forgiveness for something that had already happened. It's exactly the distinction from the parable: a debt from the past, not an exposure to danger in the present. She didn't automatically restore him to some position of trust; she simply let go, inside herself, of the weight of that account.

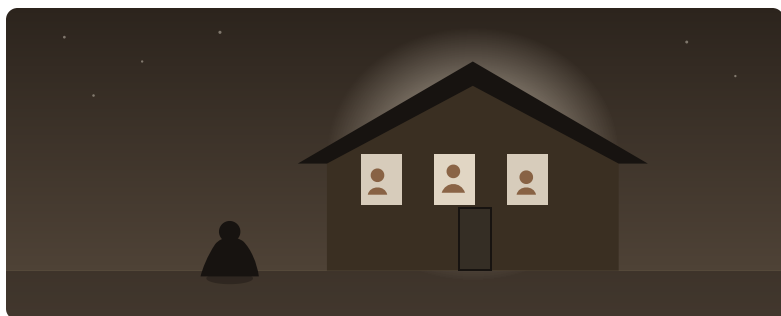
The debt that weighs the most is the one I carry.

THE WORD

Matthew 18:21-22, 32-33 (NIV)

TO REFLECT ON

- Is there a debt from the past you're still carrying, even though the person is no longer an active part of your life?
 - Have you ever confused “forgiving” with “staying exposed”? What would you need in order to separate those two things?
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CHAPTER 3

The Brother Who Stayed Outside

Have you ever felt it wasn't fair for someone to receive so much affection, such a celebration, so many second chances, after having done so much harm — or simply after having left and leaving you to carry all the weight? If that anger feels familiar, I want you to know something before you keep reading: in this story, your anger has a place too.

We almost always know it as “the parable of the prodigal son,” but it's really the story of a father and two sons, and it was told to a very specific audience: religious teachers who were upset because Jesus “welcomed sinners and ate with them.” He didn't tell it to the people who needed to come back. He told it to the people who criticized how warmly the ones who came back were received.

The younger son asked his father for his share of the inheritance while his father was still alive — something as out of place in that culture as treating someone as already dead — went off to a distant country, spent everything on wild living, and ended up feeding pigs, starving, willing to go home even as a hired hand. He rehearsed his speech of repentance on the way back. But he never got to finish it:

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20, NIV)

In that culture, a father with this man's social standing would never run in public: it was beneath his dignity. The father breaks that rule without a second thought and restores his son with the symbols of full sonship — the best robe, a ring, sandals — before the boy even finishes apologizing.

And this is usually where the story gets cut off, right when the celebration begins. But the parable continues. The older brother, the one who stayed, the one who worked all those years without ever going anywhere, heard about the party and refused to go in. When his father came out to plead with him, he answered with all his pent-up anger: that he had never left, that no one had ever thrown him a celebration like that, that it didn't seem fair. The father didn't scold him for feeling that way. He answered:

“My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’” (Luke 15:31-32, NIV)

The story ends there, without telling us whether the older brother went in or not. And I believe that's on purpose: the question was left — and is still left — for whoever hears it. What is absolutely clear is that the father goes out looking for both of them. The one who left, and the one who stayed behind, resentful. Neither of the two emotions — the shame of the one who returned, nor the anger of the one who stayed — is met with contempt.

On October 2, 2006, an armed man entered an Amish school in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, and opened fire on a group of girls, killing five before taking his own life. What happened next moved the world: within hours, members of that same Amish community visited the shooter's widow to comfort her, attended his funeral, and set up a fund to financially help his family. The case was thoroughly documented in the book *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* (2007), by Donald Kraybill, Steven Nolt, and David Weaver-Zercher, who also point out something honest: within that very community, there were people for whom that forgiveness wasn't instant or simple, and their tradition doesn't expect everyone to reach the same point at the same time. No one was singled out for taking longer to let go of their own pain.

It seems to me that's where the echo of the older brother lives: the forgiveness that gets told to the outside world — the public gesture, the story that makes the papers — doesn't always match the time each person needs on the inside. And that's okay. Your resentment, if you still feel it, doesn't make you worse than anyone else. It, too, deserves to have someone come looking for it, patiently, without rushing.

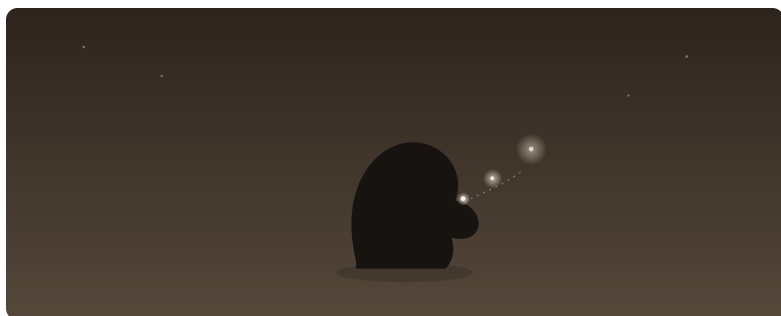
*My resentment deserves to have someone come
looking for it too.*

THE WORD

Luke 15:20 (NIV) and 15:31-32 (NIV)

TO REFLECT ON

- Have you ever felt like the older brother: doing everything right, resentful to see someone else receive grace so much more easily than you?
 - If the father in this story came looking for you today, specifically in your anger, what do you think he would say to you?
-



CHAPTER 4

Forgiveness Spoken in a Whisper

Have you ever been asked to forgive while the pain was still happening? Not later, not with time, but right there, in the heat of it, as if forgiving quickly were proof that you're a good person. If you've ever felt that pressure, I want you to know, before we go on, that this chapter is not going to put it on you again.

The gospel tradition tells us that, while a traveling teacher named Jesus of Nazareth was being executed on a cross — mocked by passersby, by religious leaders, by soldiers who at that very moment were dividing up his clothes by casting dice — he said these words:

“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.” (Luke 23:34, NIV)

TEXTUAL HONESTY

I want to be honest with you about something that's almost never mentioned when this verse gets quoted: in several of the most important ancient manuscripts we have of the Gospel of Luke, this specific phrase does not appear; other manuscripts do include it. This is a fact recognized by scholars who study the original texts, not an opinion or a matter of doubting one's faith. The vast majority of translations, including the one I use in this book, keep it, because it's been firmly rooted in the tradition from a very early date and fits with the rest of the account. I'm telling you this not to plant doubts in you, but because I'd rather be honest with you than hand you a certainty that doesn't exist.

Notice, too, the exact moment when this phrase is spoken: not after the pain had passed, but in the middle of the execution itself, with nails, agony, and people mocking him.

It is, probably, the most extreme example of forgiveness in this entire book. And “they do not know what they are doing” isn't a phrase meant for every situation: in its context it points to soldiers carrying out a routine order and to leaders convinced they were acting rightly — it isn't a claim that no one is responsible for anything.

THE MOST IMPORTANT CAUTION IN THIS BOOK

This is the chapter that demands the most care in this entire book, so I want to say it as clearly as I can. This phrase has often been used to pressure victims of abuse or violence into forgiving immediately, while the harm is still happening, as if refusing were some kind of spiritual failure. And it has also been used to excuse abusers who knew exactly what they were doing. Neither of those things is what this passage is proposing. If what you're living through today is active harm, the message is not "forgive now." The message is: your safety and your process come first. Forgiveness, if it comes, comes later and in your own time — not before, not under pressure, not as a condition for being taken seriously.

In 1993, in Minneapolis, a sixteen-year-old named Oshea Israel killed twenty-year-old Laramiun Byrd during an argument at a party. Mary Johnson, Laramiun's mother, spent years carrying a rage she later described as something that was consuming her from the inside. In 2005, while Oshea was still in prison, Mary asked to take part in a restorative justice program to meet him face to face. It wasn't an impulse: it was a decision that had matured over more than a decade of real pain, with no rush and with no one

demanding it of her. At that meeting, she told him she forgave him; he, for his part, fully acknowledged what he had done, expressed genuine remorse, and served out his entire sentence. When Oshea was released from prison in 2010, the two of them ended up living near each other, and together they founded an organization, *From This Day Forward*, to speak about forgiveness and restorative justice. Mary has told this story in an interview for NPR's StoryCorps and in a 2017 TED talk titled *The Powerful Practice of Forgiveness*.

What moves me most about Mary's story isn't that she “got over” her pain quickly — it took her more than ten years — but that her forgiveness never excused what happened, and it never skipped over Oshea's real accountability: he served his full sentence and acknowledged the harm through actions, not just words. Mary's forgiveness was a decision she made, in her own time, long before the pain had finished healing on the inside. Sometimes forgiveness starts that way: as a quiet decision, just for yourself, that arrives before the feeling fully catches up.

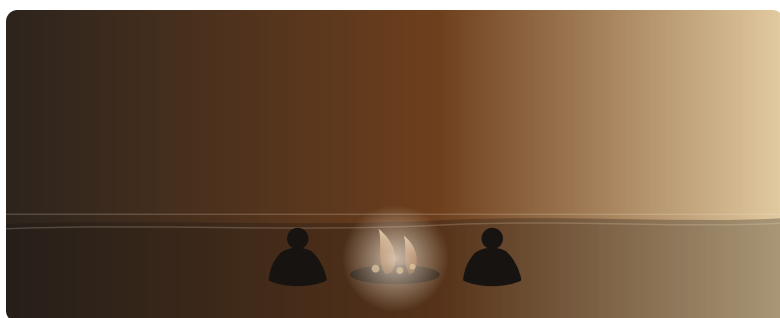
Some forgiveness is first whispered, just to yourself.

THE WORD

Luke 23:34 (NIV)

TO REFLECT ON

- If you've ever felt that you “should” forgive faster than your heart was ready to, where do you think that pressure came from?
 - What difference do you notice between forgiving something that already happened and being pressured to forgive something that's still hurting you right now?
-



CHAPTER 5

After the Fall, a Calling

Have you ever failed so badly you thought you no longer deserved a second chance? Not a small mistake. Something big, something that shames you to remember, something that made you think “this can't be fixed anymore, and neither can I.” If that shame sounds familiar, this last story is, perhaps, the most important one in the whole book.

Hours earlier, Peter had promised Jesus he was ready to die for him. That very same night, while Jesus was being interrogated, someone recognized Peter nearby and asked if he was one of his followers. Out of fear, he denied it. Not once. Three times, the last one flatly:

“Peter replied, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him... And he went outside and wept bitterly.” (Luke 22:60-62, NIV)

There's no verbal rebuke in that moment. Just a look, silent, that's enough to make Peter fall apart. Notice something important: Peter didn't justify himself, didn't minimize what he'd done, didn't say “it wasn't that big a deal.” He wept bitterly. There was a real grieving over his own failure, not a denial of it.

The story could have ended there, with Peter carrying that shame forever. But it doesn't end there. After the resurrection, in a separate scene, beside a lake, Jesus asks Peter a question — the same question, three times, exactly the same number as the denials:

“The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'” (John 21:17, NIV)

It isn't a repeated humiliation. It's an opportunity, exactly the size of the fall, to speak the truth again. And notice that the restoration doesn't end with a simple “it's fine”: Jesus gives Peter back real responsibility, a purpose, something to take care of. The restoration wasn't only emotional comfort; it was also trust returned.

I want to be very precise about something before we go on, because it's easy to confuse: this story isn't about forgiving someone who hurt you. It's about something different, and for many of us just as necessary: being restored by the very person you let down. So if this helps you think about forgiving yourself, there's a nuance I don't want you to miss: Peter's forgiveness of himself didn't happen in isolation, all

inside his own head. It happened after the one who was wronged — Jesus — took the initiative to restore him. Forgiving yourself isn't the same as simply deciding to stop feeling guilty overnight; it looks more like fully acknowledging what you did, feeling the real weight that it deserves, making amends wherever that's genuinely possible, and only then, with time, letting go of punishing yourself indefinitely for something you've already owned.

At nineteen, in Detroit, Shaka Senghor killed a man during a confrontation tied to the drug world he was involved in. He was convicted and spent almost nineteen years in prison, seven of them in solitary confinement. During that time he began reading and writing obsessively, and even wrote letters of accountability addressed to the family of the man he had killed, acknowledging what he had done without excuses. After his release from prison in 2010, he became a well-known author — his best-known book is *Writing My Wrongs* (2016) — and a researcher at the MIT Media Lab. In his 2014 TED talk, *Why your worst deeds don't define you*, he speaks openly about the difference between carrying the real guilt of what he did and staying trapped in a shame that told him he, as a whole person, was worthless. He says that learning to tell those two things apart — and finding people, mentors, and a community willing to give him a place and a purpose after serving his sentence — was what allowed him, very slowly, to stop punishing himself forever.

Neither Peter nor Shaka Senghor forgave themselves by avoiding the weight of what they'd done. Both felt it fully, first. And both, after that, received — from someone else, not

only from themselves — the chance to be something more than their worst moment.

After the fall, there is still a calling.

THE WORD

Luke 22:60-62 (NIV) and John 21:17 (NIV)

TO REFLECT ON

- Is there something you did, for which you're still punishing yourself far more than the situation — already acknowledged, and repaired wherever that was possible — calls for?
 - What difference is there, for you, between saying “I did a bad thing” and saying “I am a bad person”?
-

One Step to Ease the Weight, Not to Drop It All at Once

Come, sit with me a moment before you close the book. I'm not going to ask you to forgive anyone today. Instead, I'm going to leave you a few small questions and a single step, small enough that you can take it even while what you're carrying still weighs on you.

- 1 Name what you're carrying, without deciding yet what to do about it.** Quietly, or in writing, without sending it to anyone: a phrase, a name, a memory. You don't need to resolve it today. Just name it. Putting a name to what weighs on you is already, in itself, a first step.
- 2 Separate “what happened” from “what I do with it now.”** What happened can no longer be changed. What is in your hands, little by little, is deciding how much weight you keep giving it today. You don't have to decide it all at once.

- 3** **Ask yourself whether what you need today is to forgive, or to get to safety.** If what you're living through is harm that's still happening, today's step isn't forgiveness — it's protecting yourself. Both things — forgiving something from the past and keeping yourself safe in the present — can coexist without contradiction.
- 4** **Give yourself permission to have no deadline.** There is no correct timeline for forgiveness. You may feel you've let something go, and then, months later, feel it hurt again with an anniversary or a memory. That's not a setback: it's how deep wounds heal.
- 5** **And today's step, the only one I'm asking of you:** choose to let go of a little, not everything. Name, quietly or in writing, exactly what it is you're carrying. Nothing more. The rest has its own timing.

BEFORE CLOSING

If what you lived through was a deep betrayal, abuse, or violence, this book does not replace the guidance of a mental health professional. Seeking help is an act of courage, not a lack of faith. Your safety and your process come first.

A Closing Word

I want to close this book with a blessing, for you, whatever the weight is that you carried all the way to this final page.

May the Creator, the Eternal One, the One so many different voices have called by so many names, give you all the time you need — not a day less, and not a single day of extra pressure — to let go of what still weighs on you today. May He help you tell apart, with total clarity, forgiving from reconciling, forgiving from forgetting, forgiving from tolerating ongoing harm. May He give you the strength, if today calls for protecting yourself instead of forgiving, to do it without guilt. And if you've ever failed yourself, may you meet a gaze — someone else's, or your own, in time — that gives you back a place and a purpose, after you've grieved what needed grieving.

And above all, may you never forget this: you don't have to forgive today to deserve peace today. The weight you're still carrying doesn't make you any less worthy of being accompanied as you put it down, little by little, in your own time.

I don't know how long it will take you to let go of what weighs on you, either. But I can walk with you as you try, a little each week. And I believe that, when you're ready — today, tomorrow, or much later — you're going to discover, little by little, that the weight can be put down.

Prayer for the Week

TO PRAY SLOWLY, OUT LOUD IF YOU CAN



*Eternal One,
today I come with my hands closed,
clenching something that weighs more than I can
carry alone:
a betrayal I never asked for,
an anger that hasn't left yet,
or the reproach I make against myself when I look
inside.*

*I'm not asking You to erase what happened,
or to make me feel today that I've already let it go.
I'm asking You for company on the road,
and strength to open my hands, even just a little.*

*If I can't forgive today, stay close to me anyway.
If today all I can do is breathe, let that be enough.*

*And when I'm ready — today, tomorrow, or later on
—
help me put down the weight I'm already able to put
down.*

Amen.

Before You Close the Book

This week we walked together through five stories: a man who forgave his brothers only after testing them, and from a place of safety; a servant who couldn't let go of a debt that already belonged to the past; a father who went looking for both the son who left and the brother who stayed behind, resentful; a forgiveness spoken quietly in the middle of the greatest pain; and a man restored after failing badly, with the calling still waiting on the other side of his shame.

None of these stories promises you that the weight you're carrying will disappear completely, and none of them puts a deadline on it. All of them show you the same thing: that forgiving — others, or yourself — is a possible, real path, one you can walk with boundaries, with time, and without guilt, not in a single leap.

***A question for this week:** of everything you're carrying today, what is the smallest weight — not the biggest one, not the one that scares you most, just the smallest one — that you could already begin to put down?*

Carry this question with you. You don't have to answer it today. Just start asking it.

With love,
José.

Bibliography and Sources

Nothing you read here is made up. Every ancient word and every story has its own origin, and here it is, in case something moved you and you want to go find it.

The Scriptures

All quotations come from the **New International Version (NIV)**, © Biblica, Inc., checked against the official text, each passage read in its full historical-literary context before being quoted.

- **Genesis 45:1-15 and 50:15-21** — Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and forgives them after years of testing
- **Matthew 18:21-35** — “seventy-seven times” and the parable of the unforgiving servant (read together with Matthew 18:15-20, on conflict resolution and boundaries)
- **Luke 15:11-32** — the son who returned and the brother who stayed outside (read in the context of Luke 15:1-2)
- **Luke 23:34** — “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (with a textual-critical note: this phrase is absent from several important early Greek manuscripts, though it is retained by most translations, including the NIV)
- **Luke 22:54-62** — Peter's denial
- **John 21:15-19** — Peter's restoration

The Stories

Eva Kor, Auschwitz survivor and subject, along with her twin sister Miriam, of Josef Mengele's medical experiments on twins. In 1995 she publicly declared her forgiveness toward those responsible for the Holocaust and shook hands with former SS doctor Hans Münch, in a personal decision that sparked debate among other survivors. She founded the CANDLES Holocaust Museum in Terre Haute, Indiana. She died in 2019.

Eva Kor, Surviving the Angel of Death: The Story of a Mengele Twin in Auschwitz (with Lisa Rojany Buccieri), Tanglewood Publishing, 2009.

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Corrie ten Boom, Elizabeth Sherrill, and John Sherrill, The Hiding Place, 1971.

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The Amish community of Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania.

On October 2, 2006, following the shooting at the West Nickel Mines Amish School that left five girls dead, members of the community visited and comforted the shooter's family, attended his funeral, and set up a relief fund for his widow and children.

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Mary Johnson and Oshea Israel, Minneapolis. In 1993, Oshea Israel, then sixteen years old, killed Laramiun Byrd, Mary Johnson's son. In 2005, while Oshea was still in prison, Mary took part in a restorative justice encounter with him; after his release in 2010, the two ended up living as neighbors and founded the organization *From This Day Forward*. (Dates and facts widely corroborated by the primary sources listed below; a final editorial fact-check is recommended before print, given that these are real people identified by their full names.)

StoryCorps / NPR, interview between Mary Johnson and Oshea Israel (2011).

Mary Johnson, TED talk "The Powerful Practice of Forgiveness" (TEDxCentennialParkWomen, 2017).

Shaka Senghor, Detroit. At nineteen he killed a man during a confrontation and served almost nineteen years in prison, seven of them in solitary confinement. After his release in 2010 he became an author and was a researcher at the MIT Media Lab.

Shaka Senghor, Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, and Redemption in an American Prison, Convergent Books, 2016.

Shaka Senghor, TED talk “Why your worst deeds don't define you” (TED2014).

An Honest Note

The contemporary stories in this book involve real people, told from widely documented facts, verified against primary sources, the protagonists' own interviews, and reliable journalistic coverage prior to this edition. None of them is presented as a standard every reader must replicate in the same time or the same way: they are people who, each in their own way, decided to put down a weight.

END OF WEEKLY BOOK #3



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