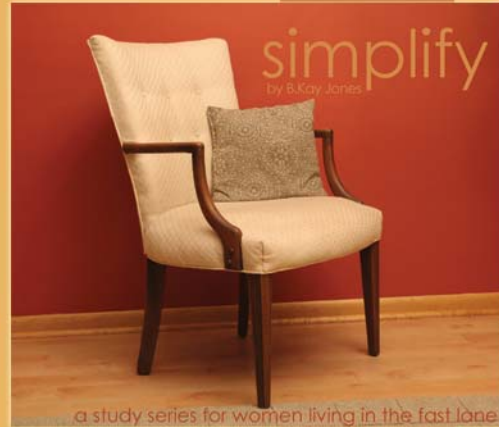


simplify

the gift of forgiveness



Forgiveness is a gift we have received from Christ, wrapped in a box called *Grace*, tied up with a crimson bow of *Love*. Grace is unmerited favor... something we don't deserve. We have received the gift, so we must pass it on. Forgiveness is a part of Matthew 22:39 where Jesus commands us to "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*"

I'm telling you, I should be an expert on this subject for I have been schooled in it for many years. I have had to both practice and be a recipient of the gift of forgiveness. The greatest thing I learned is that forgiveness is a *choice* not a warm fuzzy *feeling*. Forgiveness doesn't mean that I approve of what was done to me. It simply means I will not entangle myself or others in chains that strangle the gift of God out of my life.

Forgiveness starts out with an offense and it quickly grows tentacles of bitterness, hate, and revenge if it isn't dealt with quickly. A doctor once told me that when an offense comes to you, you have 30 seconds to either allow it to enter your long-term memory or cancel it out. I started practicing that and it was a great stress reliever. When someone spoke something unkind or hurtful, I would just say "cancel, cancel" to keep it out of my spirit. I was choosing not to house the offense in my heart.

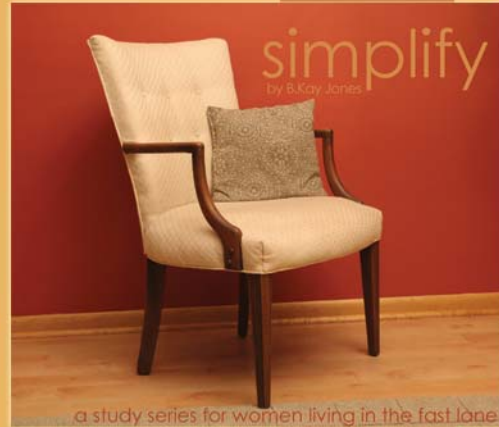
"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:14-15

God's gift of forgiveness is blocked by our unforgiveness of others. Unforgiveness chains me to the individual I hold it against. I am forever their slave in chains until I set us both free by giving them the gift of forgiveness. Perhaps they don't deserve it. Did you deserve God's grace and forgiveness? Could you have earned it? No. Forgiveness is a gift we give out of a heart of love that *trusts a just God to deal with the situation properly*. Believe me, God will take care of things when we trust His mighty hand that rules justly.

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“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.” 1 John 3:10 (NIV)

It is very plain throughout scripture that you can't be a “hater.” You can hate the event, you can hate the devil (the ultimate face behind the offense), but you have to make a choice to forgive the one who harmed you or caused you pain. Pray for them. Confess forgiveness out loud every day until you realize that you are free and the chains between you have been broken. It can and will happen if you make the choice to forgive. Forgiveness is really more a gift to yourself than to others. Nothing is worth missing heaven for. Set yourself free by passing the gift on.

“The practice of forgiveness has been shown to reduce anger, hurt, depression and stress and leads to greater feelings of hope, peace, compassion and self confidence. Practicing forgiveness leads to healthy relationships as well as physical health. It also influences our attitude which opens the heart to kindness, beauty, and love.” Dr. Frederic Luskin

Simplicity Suggestions

1. Are you holding unforgiveness in your heart toward anyone? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal them to you. Make a list of those you need to forgive.
2. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the strength and courage to forgive those who have hurt you, so you can move forward with your life in Christ.
4. Speak things that are not as thought they were. Will you choose to speak forgiveness until it becomes a reality to you?