

RECONCILIATION
HOW DO I FORGIVE MYSELF?
HELPING OTHERS HELPS

By Buck Griffith

I do not know about you but the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous means much to me. The final *step* urges those helped to help others. In large part, it is how I find *my* forgiveness and healing. Healed, I heal. Forgiven, I forgive. Mended, I mend. *One beggar tells another where he found bread*. Like Jesus, my mission is to help the poor, heal the brokenhearted, set captives free, bring sight to the blind and liberty to the bruised (Luke 4:18; Galatians 6:1-2). If I am to be successful, Jesus says I find my forgiveness by “forgiving my debtors” (Matthew 6:12, 14-15). If unforgiving, I also tend to be unforgiving of self. As my ability to forgive others increases, I experience a deeper sense of forgiveness within myself.



Helping others helps!

My best gift to you is a forgiving heart. I admit it is not easy. Jesus said if the same person sins against me 7 times a day but repents, I am to forgive him (Luke 17:3-6). I might forgive you once or twice a day but 7 times? No wonder the apostles asked the Lord to: “Increase our faith.” But Jesus said it only requires faith as a grain of mustard seed.

I can identify with Peter. He may have had Luke 17 in mind when he asked the Lord if he should forgive his brother up to 7 times (Matthew 18:21-22). Peter probably passed out when he heard the answer: **490!** He had a long way to go and so do I but . . .

Helping Others Helps!

Satan wanted to “sift” Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31-34). If you are *wheat*, you end up feeling like you have been through the *mill*. I think I’ve *been there - done that*. Jesus told Peter that He prayed for him. I don’t know about *you*, but it is awesome to think Jesus would pray for me but He *does* so as our Advocate, Mediator and Intercessor! Jesus prayed that after Peter survived the *sifting* and was *converted*, he would *strengthen his brethren!* You see, Jesus knew that . . .

Helping others helps!

Full of pride and cocky, Peter said he would go to prison for Jesus and even *die* for Him. But the Lord knows our weaknesses (“weak knees”) and predicted Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. He did.

At times I boast of doing some great thing for the Lord and then fall flat on my face! I am reminded that I stand by faith – not by *my* own power or might. As soon as possible, I recommit myself to God and I am anxious to show Him and everyone else that I am now stronger. Peter *walked on water* (Matthew 14) but took his eyes off Jesus and sank. No wonder Peter *ran* to the empty grave of Jesus in John 20:4!

It must have been excruciating for Peter when Jesus asked him three times if he loved Him in John 21:15-17. Peter fell all over himself trying to reassure Jesus of his love and fidelity. See the words of our Lord each time Peter said he loved Him. Talk is cheap.

- “Feed my lambs” (v. 15)
- “Feed my sheep” (v. 16)
- “Feed my sheep” (v. 17)

Helping others helps!

Jesus taught how a good shepherd seeks ONE lost sheep in Luke 15:4. It makes no difference *which* one it is – young, old, male, female, red-head, blonde, or bald. Jesus came to *seek and save the lost*. Peter’s soul was valuable. Your soul is valuable. My soul is valuable. There is no such thing as a **worthless** soul. ALL souls matter.

So, did Simon Peter (like a BC powder) come back strong? I would say so! It was Peter that stood up at Pentecost in Acts 2:14 and gave out the *kingdom keys* as he told the lost what to do to be saved (verse 38). His heart must have been beating like crazy when about 3,000 were baptized that day (verse 41). They likely ran out of *baptismal certificates* and *new member packets!* Peter helped others.

Helping others helps!

Wow! I am inspired to see how God used a swearing, lying, and denying person like Peter to help build His church (Matthew 16:18). I am amazed to see how God can take a blaspheming persecutor like Saul and turn him into an “apostle” like Paul. The same verse that declares God’s amazing grace is sufficient (Second Corinthians 12:9) says: *for my strength is made perfect in weakness*. In fact, it is in our weakness that God comforts and sustains us so we can comfort others later (Second Corinthians 1:3-4).

Helping others helps!

I stand in awe of church elders. Look at their qualifications in First Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9, and you will understand why I say this. It is just one more reason that I am impressed with Peter. Read First Peter 5:1-4. Peter was an elder, too. In this text, he writes to his fellow elders. Jesus told Peter - “feed my sheep” (John 21). Peter instructs shepherds today to do the same.

Elders are men like Peter. Their past is not *lily white*. They are good men but imperfect. Therefore, they understand the pain and suffering of lambs like me. The gentle shepherd does not grab lambs by the throat. He *willingly* and gently tends to them, leading by example. Peter had a history of failure but refused to let it define him. It had to be hard to *live it down* but he did so by *living UP*. He succeeded through serving.

Helping others helps!

I cannot undo the events in my past. All I can do is learn from them, recommit my life to Christ and *strengthen others*. As we have opportunity, we are to “do good” to ALL – *especially those of the household of faith* (Galatians 6:10).

I have found what the whole world wants: **forgiveness, healing and wholeness**. It is only found in Christ. I want to share it with everyone! The best way I know is to have a forgiving spirit. The more I forgive, the more forgiven I feel. This is my gift to you. In this way I reflect Christ – the *Light of the World* – in the darkest of dungeons. It is through forgiveness that the poor see the gospel, broken hearts and shattered lives are mended, captives are freed, vision is restored, and the bruises no longer hurt like they used to.

What will help get me through this day? It will not be by focusing on me. It will be because I am reaching out to help someone else in the name of Jesus.

Helping others helps!

Finally, Peter wrote in First Peter 5:4 - *And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away!* Helping with a simple cup of water has eternal consequences (Mark 9:41). Prison ministry is one way to “pay it forward.”