

'Between You and God'

By Jules Miller



Mother Teresa of Calcutta is best known for her decades of charitable work among the poor, but she also is remembered for her writings. She's perhaps best known for emphasizing a version of the *Do It Anyway* poem on the wall of her home for children in Calcutta. This version begins: "People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway."

Forgiveness is not a normal human instinct. It's easier when the person who wronged us tries to make it up to us, or at least says something in the nature of an apology. It's much harder, even for the practicing Christian, when the wrongdoer couldn't care less. Yet, that's exactly what "anyway" conveys.

I didn't have any enemies until high school. Of course, in grade school there were pushing and punching incidents, but the next day we were playing together at recess or talking about baseball and getting along just fine.

My first enemy was Brian who decided in high school to be my enemy. I don't know why. Brian was as smart as me, and he made the varsity baseball team when I didn't. We never pushed or

punched each other, because we both knew our Christian Brothers high school would punish us severely if we did.

I went to high school in ancient times when gas station attendants filled your tank. Once, the attendant told me there was what looked like sugar around my gas cap, and someone probably sugared my tank. I went to a pay phone (something else we had in ancient times) and called my dad. He said have the gas station flush and brush everything out of the tank, which I did, and it saved my engine. I can't prove who did it, but I didn't have any other enemies.

My high school class has a reunion every five years. I ignored Brian at my five-year reunion, and I was far away on military service for my 10-year reunion. I took my wife to my 15-year reunion, and she said I should try to make up with Brian. I told her that was the silliest idea I'd ever heard, but she persisted. Only to please her did I say I would try.

I approached Brian and asked if he

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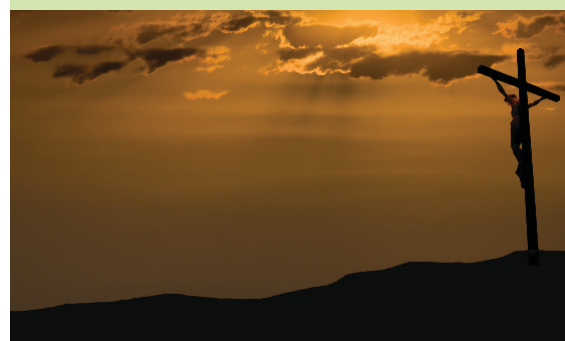
INSIDE: REFLECTIONS

Forgive Them Anyway

Make allowance for anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. (Colossians 3:13 NLT)

Forgiveness is tough for each of us. When someone has hurt us or offended us, we often retreat, licking our wounds while ignoring our own unwillingness to forgive. We hope the pain will eventually go away because "time heals all wounds." Our own experience tells us nothing is further from the truth.

Most of us walk around with grudges, resentment, and bitterness. We cling to them tightly, remaining angry. Ongoing unforgiveness physically, emotionally, and spiritually gnaws at us.



Jesus wants to set us free. He teaches us about forgiveness through his own example. Crucified on the cross, he says, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)

Forgiveness for others is the best gift we could possibly give. In us this will fulfill Paul's admonition in the preceding verse in Colossians. "Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourself with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience."

November Reflections: Pages 2-4

REFLECTIONS WEEK 1

No Regrets

By Al Parolini

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. ... (1 Corinthians 7:17)

In Hunt & Kelly's book, the *Fourth Quarter of your Life*, there is a chapter titled: "The Power of the Spoken Word." Let me illustrate ...

About 12 years ago, I was attending the funeral of my son's father-in-law. Forty-three years earlier, my son's mother and I separated and eventually divorced. There were many causes leading to the divorce, but the ultimate outcome was predetermined. This divorce was her choice, and I became a single parent, with full custody of two sons, ages 5 and 2½.

Deep down inside, I felt crushed, betrayed, abandoned, and much like a sailor adrift in a raft on the

open sea. After attending the first of many Challenge Weekends, I came to recognize that I needed to ask for forgiveness from my former wife.

This opportunity presented itself at this funeral. I saw my former wife and asked her if we could speak privately. She agreed, and I opened the conversation, explaining that I was asking for her forgiveness for the many things which I had contributed to the breakup of our marriage. Surprisingly, she accepted my apology, and asked for my forgiveness for the many things she contributed to the ultimate divorce. This act spurred a conversation which lasted for about an hour, and a wonderful reconciliation was the result. Speaking with my former wife in this manner had been on my mind for a couple of years. I now wish I'd done it sooner.

A while after the conversation with my former wife, I was talking with a therapist. In our session one day, the therapist interrupted me and boldly stated: "So you think you are smarter than God?" These words pierced my heart. In silence, I began to understand—if our Lord who died

for my sins and forgives me, who am I to hold a grudge?

Al Parolini lives in Salinas, California, with his wife Sharon of 39 years. He is a retired small business manager and currently volunteers serving multiple nonprofit organizations within the community.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, provide us the courage, patience, and obedience to follow you, no matter the degree of difficulty.

REFLECT

Are you courageous enough to respond to the Lord's challenges?

DISCUSS

Looking back at your life, what is the most challenging situation which tested your character, strength, and determination?

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REFLECTIONS WEEK 2

God's Plan

By Laurie Primavera

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (Matthew 6:14)"

Several years ago, I moved from Fresno to Monterey to live and work by the ocean. I accepted a leadership position that I loved.

After several years, a colleague and trusted friend betrayed me by confiding to the CEO some concerns that I had shared with her. The CEO of the organization was a very smart man who was fraught with bouts of anger and bouts of depression. My friend and I shared both admiration for his business acumen and concerns about his emotional outbursts.

My relationship with the CEO was destroyed. I knew that I could not stay

in the organization even though he did not confront me with what I had said about him. I was both hurt and angry.

I was forced to my knees in prayer, asking God to forgive me for my unkind words toward our boss, and to help me forgive my friend while remaining open to his plan for me. I loved living in Monterey, and yet, this job was clearly over for me.

After five months of prayer and waiting on the Lord, I was hired into a position in Fresno that was aligned with my abilities and values. Through my patience and trust in the Lord, I was able to return home, and make a difference through the position for which I had prayed.

I knew I had to forgive my friend. She reached out several times, I let her know that I forgave her, and that God had other plans for me. While we are no longer close friends, my ability to forgive her gave me the freedom to move on.

Laurie Primavera has been a nurse and health care leader for the last 30 years, overseeing outpatient programs such as hospice and home health. She currently coordinates a Stephen Ministry program at her church.

PRAY

Lord, forgive me my transgressions and teach me your ways of forgiveness of others. Remind me always to "remove the log from my eye, before worrying about the splinter in others."

REFLECT

Was there a time that you needed to ask God for forgiveness while forgiving someone else?

DISCUSS

Consider a time in the workplace when you had to ask God for his forgiveness and/or when you had to forgive someone else? What was the outcome?

REFLECTIONS WEEK 3

He's My Brother

By Lou Gionfriddo

Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends. (Proverbs 17:9)"

Years ago, I worked for a man who ran the organization with a heavy-fisted approach which didn't honor the needs of the staff or the people we were serving. This was not my approach, and several times he lashed out at me. I ended up being let go from the job, despite support from my colleagues.

We didn't end our relationship well. But I realized that I needed to forgo lingering resentment and unforgiveness.

I'm not sure he was aware that he had done anything wrong, so I chose

to forgive him, not overtly, but in my heart. I knew that I had to forgive and move past the offenses, for my own freedom. I also didn't want to be part of maintaining stories of wrongdoing.

My friends, recalling the stories from that workplace, but seeing how peacefully I was interacting with this man afterwards, asked, "Why wouldn't you harbor resentment?" I said that it's because I want to see this former coworker as a brother in Christ. I want to be friends; I don't want to harbor any resentment.

Our personalities might never mesh, but, to this day, we interact pleasantly when we see each other, greeting one another with a hug and talking.

Lou Gionfriddo retired from federal contracting in 2016 and currently lives

in Mishawaka, Indiana with his wife, Ginni. Lou is a math resource teacher at St. Anthony de Padua Catholic School in South Bend, Indiana where he works with students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

PRAY

Father, you have taught us to forgive, as we have been forgiven by you. Strengthen us through grace to offer forgiveness.

REFLECT

Would your friends and colleagues be surprised by your example of forgiveness?

DISCUSS

Share about a time you chose to humbly forgive.

REFLECTIONS WEEK 4

No Judgment

By Nancy Huddleston

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over." (Matthew 18:15)

One day, I received a card in the mail from a former coworker. I was pleasantly surprised to see her name on the return address, but when I opened the card, things took an unexpected turn.

The card started out with: "I forgive you." My first reaction was, "forgive me for what?" As I read her note, I was faced with the ugly truth: I'd been a bad boss. But here she was, forgiving me, telling me she understood the stress I was under, and inviting me to write back or call. I never did. I was too embarrassed.

A few months later, I was volunteering at the high school pulling weeds in

a flower bed near the front entrance. Nearby, people were going in and out of the school's theater where they were attending a church program. As we were cleaning up, I heard, "Hi Nancy, how are you?" It was my former coworker who had sent me the card.

She walked up, hugged me, and said, "wow, I was wondering who was always taking care of these flower beds. I'm not surprised it's you."

I didn't know what to say, except that I was sorry I never responded to her card. I told her I was ashamed for not responding, and even more ashamed of being a poor coworker. As I kept trying to apologize, she smiled and nodded. When I stopped making a fool out of myself, she told me that forgiveness gave her the freedom to live a joyful life. In that instant, her grace taught me how to forgive myself, so that I could overcome my past mistakes to become a better coworker to others.

Nancy Huddleston is a member of WorkLight's editorial team and the editor of The Flame. She and her husband Mike live in Burnsville, Minnesota, and she is a freelance writer and editor.

PRAY

Lord, please give me the strength to admit my past mistakes, thereby helping to heal those who I have hurt in the process.

REFLECT

What's the best method to forgive ourselves?

DISCUSS

Has there been a time at work when you did the wrong thing, thereby hurting others in the process? What can you do to reconcile that situation?

PRESIDENT'S NOTE



And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

Forgiveness and Fundraising

You might read the title of this month's President's Note and ask yourself: "What on earth do fundraising and forgiveness have in common?" Great question. For starters they both often take effort and can bear remarkable fruit. But that's just the beginning of their similarities.

In Henri Nouwen's book *The Spirituality of Fundraising*, he lays out in simple terms how fundraising is not just about money. It all comes down to relationships, ministry, and conversion. Every donor is a brother or sister in Christ. Together we

pursue the God-given mission and vision of WorkLight. Each gift is an opportunity for spiritual growth and transformation.

Forgiveness relies on similar truths. It all comes down to relationships, ministry, and conversion. God invites us to see one another through his own eyes in order to practice the grace and mercy of Christ toward one another. The Holy Spirit moves among and between us as forgiveness removes distractions. Along the way, each opportunity to forgive is an opportunity to start again. Thank you, Jesus!

I pray you'll forgive me for fundraising. But this ministry is too precious not to be stewarded properly into the hands of the next generation. Please join me in prayer as my brother or sister, in ministry as my partner, and in transformation as my coworker. If you were to forgive all the mistakes made by this ministry

over the past four decades, then how would that change your WorkLight relationships? Your calling to and role within this ministry? Your life?

Together we have come so far since 1983. Forty years in we have focus and momentum unlike ever before around Challenge Weekends and igniters. There's critical work ahead to not only to get igniters onto Challenge Weekends, but to get them into relationships and community as a part of the ministry. We can't let distractions like unforgiveness get in the way. We need you more than ever to ensure this ministry burns bright for the next generation. Please join me in prayer for our year-end efforts to forgive, fundraise, and get to work on the path God has so mercifully placed before us.

With you in Christ,
Wes



Forgiveness Journey

By Greg Aitkens

My forgiveness journey began when I was a child. I grew up in a dysfunctional alcoholic family, where there was a lot of criticism, arguments, slammed doors, and no apologies.

As I reflect on this time in my young life, I believe Jesus reached in to save me in several ways. First, I was away from home a lot, and only went home to eat, sleep, and study. He provided me with the insight at a young age that this family environment was not how things were supposed to work. Second, Jesus provided me the strength to withstand constant criticism from my mother, who was controlling, manipulative, and toxic. My motto at an early age was: “I don’t need to put up with this”—and I didn’t.

Like many, I stuffed that anger down deep inside, but found that I could go ballistic very easily over minor life events. The core issue was unforgiveness. When I became a Christian in my mid-30s (after attending a Challenge Weekend), I recognized the call I had to forgive my parents, and fortunately, through a series of miraculous events orchestrated by our Lord Jesus, I was able to do that.

In the early 1990s, I joined a financial services firm co-owned by my “business mentor” at that time. The financial agreement going in was

scratched out and handwritten on a piece of paper, but soon changed to my detriment. I became suspicious about my new firm. Soon after, I was instrumental in landing several large new business opportunities for the benefit of the firm. I had been promised a split on what I brought in, but never saw a dime. When I confronted my mentor, all I got was lame nonsensical excuses about why I had not been paid.

I was devastated, hurt, and very angry about all these events. Again, our Lord Jesus intervened to get me out and away from this firm and led me to a wonderful new place of employment. However, damages in me had occurred and I was again confronted with the sovereign call of Jesus to forgive. Forgiving “cheaters and betrayers” was the last thing on my mind. I struggled with this for a very long time.

In November of 2011, I presented a talk to the Palm Desert Chapter, based on the Scripture verses in Ezekiel 36:25-27. Here, God is taking out our stony stubborn hearts, and giving us new, tender, and responsive hearts. I shared my own stony heart story as related to unforgiveness, and as we went around the table in the discussion groups, I learned that most of us still struggle with forgiving certain people in our lives. Up until that point, I had no

idea that most people struggle with forgiveness.

I began to think and pray about how to help others with how to forgive, which led me to explore the idea of writing a book. But the Lord had a better idea: to develop a “workbook” people could use in a workshop on forgiveness. I’m always amazed at what our Lord is doing when it comes to forgiveness. He wants to set us free!

Greg Aitkens is a member of the editorial team who lives in Cambria, California, with his wife Ginny. He is the author of A New Mindset for Forgiveness and can be reached at greg.r.aitkens@gmail.com.

‘Between You and God’

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thought the St. Louis Cardinals (a team we both loved) could make it to the World Series. He responded pleasantly and then asked me about my sons and my military service. He suggested we get drinks from the bar, and we spoke enjoyably for another 15 minutes. We communicated over the following years, and even went to a Cardinals game.

Brian died, so I won’t see him at the next reunion. I’ll miss the man I would have thought to this day was my enemy, if not for my wife. Fortunately, she understood better than me the importance God puts on forgiveness. That’s why the *Do It Anyway* version attributed to Mother Teresa ends with: “In the final analysis, it is between you and your God. It was never between you and them anyway.”

Jules Miller is president of the WorkLight Orange County Men’s Chapter. He lives with his wife Sheila in Dana Point, California. He can be reached at julesmillerlaw@att.net.

Finding Strength

By Lynn Casasnovas



There's a popular saying: "God doesn't give you more than you can handle." I'd like to rephrase that to: "God doesn't give you more than he can carry you through." Jesus didn't promise a trouble-free life, but he did promise that following him provides comfort and solace in times of trouble. And of the myriad troubles that we face, one of the biggest is forgiveness.

We have all been wronged. Whether misunderstood, mischaracterized, or victimized, we have all experienced moments and seasons where hatred and anger filled our minds and fueled our thoughts and decisions. In those moments, it's as if there is no room for God's promises because our hurt is so severe, we can't feel anything more than resentment, indignation, and even fury.

I know because just 21 years into my son's life, I lost him to a senseless murder. And yet, what I learned was that

God's promises are real, and so powerful are his promises, that it was during this most difficult period in my life when I was able to tap into the great depth of love God has for me.

Preceding the tragedy of my son's death, my husband and I had joined a prayer group. Previously, faith, let alone a faith community, had not been an intricate part of our lives. Losing our son and having a faith community that God had guided us to ahead of time equipped me with the support I needed to turn to prayer and not hate, to reconcile my relationship with God so I could be the nurturer my surviving children needed, and ultimately, to make the conscious decision to forgive.

By the time of my son's murderer's sentencing, I had already forgiven him. God's unwavering love sustained me to the extent that I didn't need revenge to get me through the tragedy. God was for

me; God was rooting for me; and God was there comforting me when my heart ached the most. I could question why it happened to me or what I could do to get back at my son's killer, or I could accept God's love into my heart to where there was no room for hatred.

God's love is a transformative power, healing the deepest wounds, and allowing us to move forward. Hatred holds us back. Forgiveness is not about condoning hurtful actions; it's about freeing ourselves from the burden of carrying something inauthentic to the likeness of God. When we forgive, we release the chains that bind us to the past and open ourselves to reacting to a difficult situation the way Christ would. Forgiveness is about asking how can I be a Christian as opposed to how can I be vindicated?

Embracing God's love and promises, we break free from the shackles and chains of anger and hatred, letting God's light shine within us instead. There is boundless love available to us from our Savior, granting us the strength to embrace his grace. In that moment, we are empowered to shoulder our burdens, fortified by hope residing in hearts anchored in unwavering faith and bolstered by divine promises fulfilled. It is then that we are enabled to embrace the boundless love of God and extend it to others.

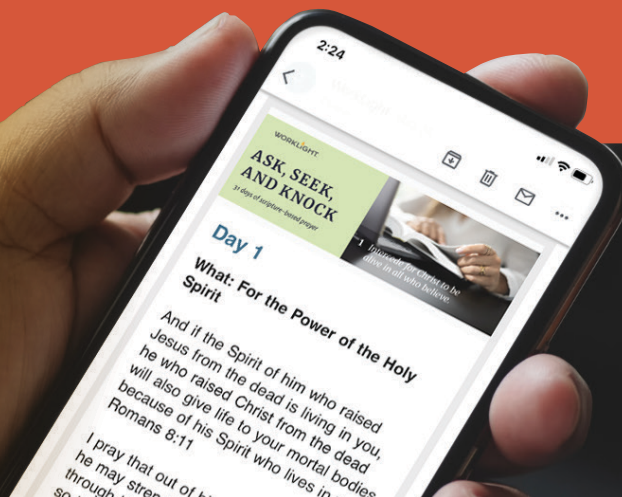
Lynn Casasnovas and her husband live in Waddell, Arizona. Lynn has volunteered as a catechist with her church for more than 30 years. She recently retired from the financial industry.

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NEWS

SPOTLIGHT CHALLENGE WEEKEND

Spaces are filling up for the SpotLight Challenge Weekend, hosted by the Salinas Men's Chapter from November 17-19. Learn more and register today. This is sure to be a remarkable weekend for re-igniters and igniters alike. Check out this opportunity and more at worklight.org/events/.

NEW BOARD CHAIR

Thank you to Rich Preuss, who has seen WorkLight through a dynamic season of rebranding, growth, and revitalization. As our Board continues to develop and expand, we are blessed to welcome Luke Cahill as



the ministry's new board chair. As a busy entrepreneur with a house full of young children and a heart full of love for Jesus, Luke is eager to step in to ensure that other 40-something-year-old igniters like him are going to work each day with the Holy Spirit.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the past year, Women's Challenge Weekends in Gilroy and Fresno were among the top performing weekends as measured by first-time igniter attendance. Although most of our Chapters are men's chapters, we also have vibrant communities of sisters in Christ. In what year do you think the first women's Challenge Weekend was held?

Last month's answer: The Challenge newsletter, now known as The Flame, was first published in January 1983.

500 BY 2025: THANKS TO YOU, THANKS BE TO GOD

CIC and WorkLight have been shining a light on living a life of faith in the workplace for four decades. Since 2020, we have honed our focus on our

core initiative, Challenge Weekends. We are blessed to be on pace to host 15 Challenge Weekends in 2023 and have already welcomed 90 first-time igniters! This has been possible thanks to the prayers, dedication, and generous support from people like you.

YEAR-END GIVING

Since 1983, Christians in Commerce International and WorkLight Ministries have helped thousands of men and women nationwide experience the Holy Spirit. Today, the need for this ministry has never been greater, and we need your help. To ensure we can meet our 2023 goal, we are striving to raise \$90,000 by Giving Tuesday on November 28. Thank you for giving whatever God has placed in your heart to give. Whether you are in a position to contribute \$1 or make a five-figure gift, we appreciate your being an important part of CIC's 40-year history of nurturing spiritual growth, community, and transformation in Christ. Learn more and join the movement at worklight.org/support-us.

LET'S SHINE THE LIGHT

Jesus tells us to "let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). We want God's light to shine bright in more workplaces around the country. Help us spread the light of Christ by giving financially to WorkLight. Consider making a gift as part of #GivingTuesday on November 28, 2023.

We can do this – together!

WorkLight.org/shine

WORKLIGHT

*"I have been
crucified with Christ
and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me."*

Galatians 2:20

NOVEMBER 23

WorkLight.org

THE FLAME

WORKLIGHT PRAYER

Father,

*Fill us with your Holy Spirit
that we may be made new
and bring the presence of Christ into all we do;
That we may grow in love for you, and for all;
That we may be humble and wise stewards of your creation;
That we may bring your light into our workplaces;
That we may lead all to unity in you;
Through Jesus, our Lord.*


Amen

VISION Being Christ in the workplace

MISSION To encourage and equip Christians to be God's presence in the workplace by the power of the Holy Spirit, exercising faith, integrity, and excellence

VALUES Christians in Commerce (DBA WorkLight) is an ecumenical organization committed to:

- Growing and being transformed in Jesus Christ
- Manifesting the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Building strong brotherhood and sisterhood
- Serving God and expanding his Kingdom in all aspects of our lives

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