

Forgiveness Friday #8

29 October 2021



This week, my challenge was to forgive someone from way, way back in my past. I was sixteen, he was seventeen, and I thought he was my boyfriend. I hope I'm smarter now, but I'm not so sure. Avoiding life because you don't really know how to handle it doesn't give you much opportunity to grow your smarts.

Even after half a century, it took me a while to forgive that boy, not because he'd hurt me, but because I did not want to encounter my past self. I had to forgive myself for the stupidity and gullibility, vanity and arrogance of my sixteen-year-old self before I could meet that boy again in my imagination. The blessings then flowed easily, including a blessing for a deep capacity for selfless love of others. (I put my hand up for that one, too. Yes please, God!) I was even able to feel affection for those two silly teenagers.

Just as blessing is an action that 'sets' forgiveness and makes it hold, I see now that self-forgiveness can also be a very important ingredient in forgiveness of others. It can prepare the ground for forgiveness of others and be part of the 'setting' process, too.

When I started on this journey I was not expecting to learn about self-forgiveness; my aim was forgiveness of others. But I had my first lesson in self-forgiveness way back in week two. After my experience of this week, I re-read [FF#2](#) and was struck by this sentence: 'I suspect the reforming qualities of repentance are accelerated if we can forgive ourselves and shift from shame.'

Of course! *Self-forgiveness is an accelerant.* It accelerates the change process that repentance initiates, and it accelerates the process of forgiving others. And the reason it works this way is because God has forgiven us. When Jesus says, 'Your sins are forgiven you', it is a declaration of what God has already freely given us. We have been gifted with forgiveness and we're meant to pass it on, not hoard it for ourselves. The more we give it away, the more we have. Jesus puts it plainly in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35).

What a relief it is to know that we don't have to twist ourselves into knots trying to conjure up forgiveness out of pain. We already have forgiveness; we just have to share it around. But, as Jesus' parable teaches us, being willing to share is the tricky part!

Love, Lyndal

PS Printable pdfs of each week's letter are posted [here](#).