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Ephesians 4 (ESV)

17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ! - 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self,

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Ephesians 4 (ESV)

which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor,

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Ephesians 4 (ESV)


doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

4

Main Theme

Forgiveness is a healing gift God gives to caregiver - freeing the heart from bitterness, softening emotional wounds, and empowering compassionate care even when dementia creates repeated hurt or misunderstanding.

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The heart is where the
journey of forgiveness begins.

Stephen Richards

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The Heart & Forgiveness

- Caregiving exposes the heart's wounds, but God uses forgiveness to heal & reshape the caregiver from the inside out.
- Dementia often causes hurtful words or behaviors that are not intentional but still painful.

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The Heart & Forgiveness

- God invites us to bring these wounds to Him rather than bury them.
- 22 Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.
(Psalm 55:22 ESV)***

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The Heart & Forgiveness

- Forgiveness is not excusing the behavior - it is releasing the emotional weight.

28 “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28–30 ESV)

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The Heart & Forgiveness

- The Spirit softens our heart, making tenderness possible even in exhaustion.

26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:26–27 ESV)

10

The Heart & Forgiveness

- Forgiveness becomes a daily spiritual rhythm, not a one-time decision.

3 “Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, 4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” (Luke 17:3–4 ESV)

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12

Bitterness or Forgiveness

- Unforgiveness drains emotional energy; forgiveness restores the capacity to love with patience & gentleness.
- Bitterness grows when hurt is unaddressed, especially in long-term caregiving.

15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; (Hebrews 12:15 ESV)

13

Bitterness or Forgiveness

- Forgiveness clears emotional space for compassion to re-emerge.

12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (Colossians 3:12–13 ESV)

14

Bitterness or Forgiveness

- Letting go of resentment protects our spiritual & emotional health.

17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (Romans 12:17–18 ESV)

15

Bitterness or Forgiveness

- Compassion becomes possible when we see our loved one's disease, not their intent.

34 And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments. (Luke 23:34 ESV)

- Forgiveness strengthens our ability to respond with kindness rather than react in frustration.

11 Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. (Proverbs 19:11 ESV)

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17

Forgive as God Forgives

- We do not forgive in our own strength; we forgive because God has forgiven us fully & freely.
- God's forgiveness is the model & the source of our forgiveness.

*13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
(Colossians 3:13 ESV)*

18

Forgive as God Forgives

- We often feel guilt for moments of impatience - God's forgiveness covers these too.

*9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 1:9 ESV)*

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Forgive as God Forgives

- Receiving God's grace empowers us to extend grace to our loved one.

*9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
(2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV)*

20

Forgive as God Forgives

- Forgiveness becomes an act of worship, reflecting Jesus' heart.

***34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
(John 13:34–35 ESV)***

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Forgive as God Forgives

- God's forgiveness restores our identity, grounding us in love rather than failure.

***9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
(1 Peter 2:9–10 ESV)***

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Discussion Questions

- What kinds of hurts - big or small - tend to accumulate in your caregiving journey?
- How does understanding your loved one's disease help you reframe moments that feel personal?
- What emotions rise in you when you hear the call to “forgive one another”?
- How has God's forgiveness toward you shaped the way you forgive others?
- What would it look like for forgiveness to become a daily spiritual practice in your caregiving?

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