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with Steve Halliday, PhD

FORGIVE TO LIVE

PART THREE

**CHOOSING
FORGIVENESS**
CHOICE NOT CHANCE
DETERMINES YOUR FUTURE



Forgive to Live® Workbook

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Foundation

TEN PRINCIPLES OF FORGIVENESS

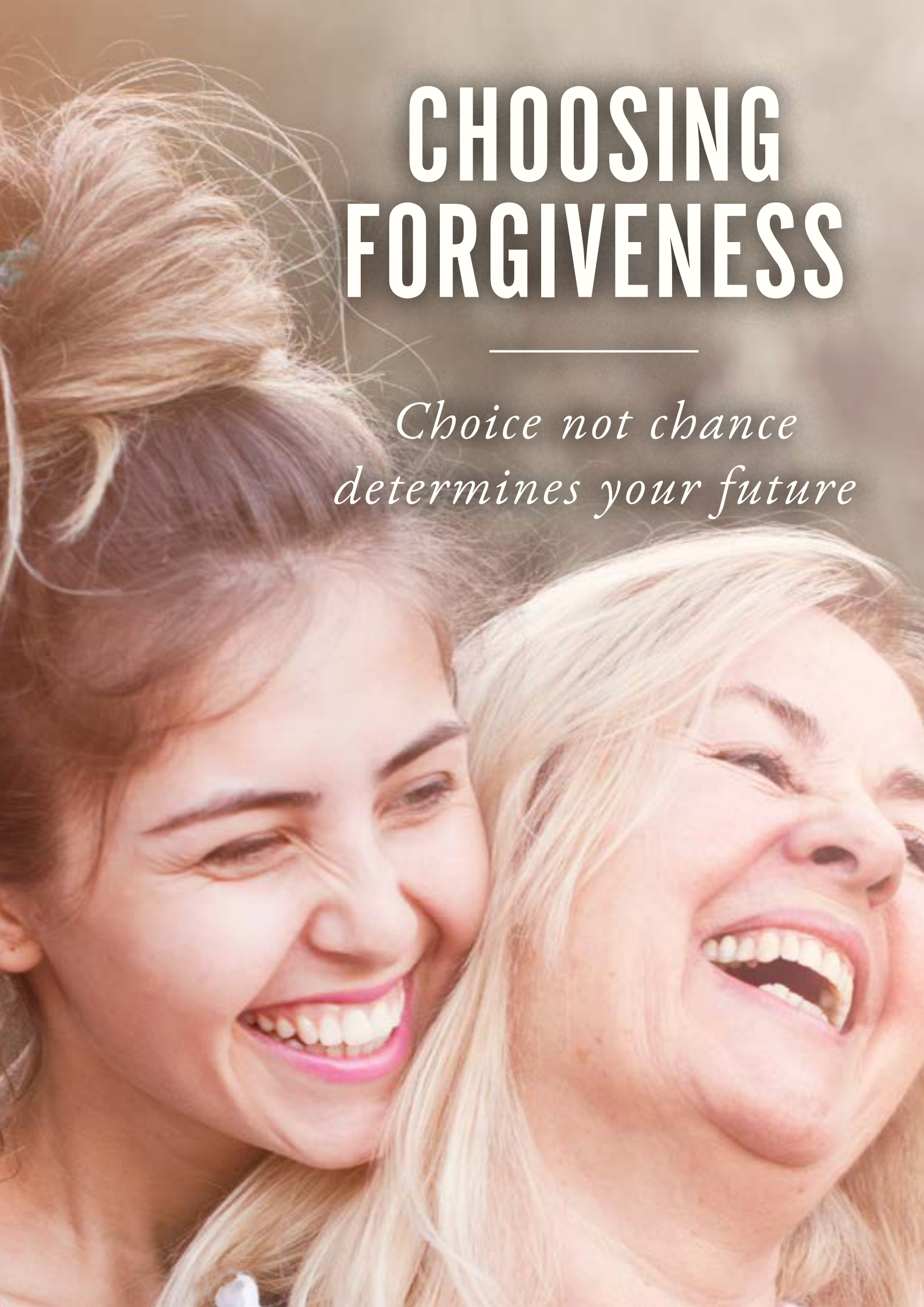
Forgiveness begins when you ...

1. Accept that life is not fair and that others may play by a different set of rules than you do.
2. Stop blaming others for your circumstances.
3. Understand that you cannot change the person who hurt you; you can change only yourself.
4. Acknowledge the anger and hurt that some unpleasant event is causing you.
5. Re-frame your story of hurt—your “grievance story”—by placing the hurtful events in a broader context than your current point of view.
6. Recognise that only you can make the choice to forgive.
7. Shift your view of the offender as the one with all the power to seeing that person as weak and acting out of their own unresolved hurts and struggles.
8. Intentionally move from victim to victor as you begin to tap into your inner strengths and abilities.
9. Understand that forgiveness will take time and cannot be rushed.
10. Take responsibility for your life and your future.

If you want to live, at some point you must choose to forgive.

CHOOSING FORGIVENESS

*Choice not chance
determines your future*





— CASE STUDY —

Q *Jerry's Story*

Jerry and Jim had been the best of friends all through high school and university. When they graduated, Jim took a job on the other side of the country. Although they remained friends, they contacted each other less frequently as their lives got busier and their respective careers took off. But whenever they did talk to each other, they immediately recalled all their old experiences and laughed and acted as if they had never been apart.

About five years after graduation, Jerry found out that Jim had married—and had left Jerry off the invitation list. It felt bad enough to Jerry that Jim had not asked Jerry to be in his wedding... but not even to be invited? The very thought infuriated Jerry. How could his best friend ignore him like that?

Jerry vowed that he would never again speak to Jim. Every time Jerry thought of his former best friend, he would boil over inside again. Eventually Jerry became explosive, and even his new friends started avoiding him.

When a friend suggested Jerry consider the option of forgiveness, he rejected it out of hand. He believed he could not forgive even if he wanted to. How could Jerry ever forgive Jim for what he had done? But without forgiving him, how could he ever be able to let go of his anger?



💡 WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

*You either remember or you forget
– you can't have it both ways.*

Too often we hurt more than is necessary simply because we would rather suffer than forgive. For some reason, we believe that staying angry is better than getting over our anger. Anger, designed to be a fleeting mechanism that helps us deal with an immediate situation, too often grows into a resentment that never gets turned off.

Every time someone hurts you, you have a choice to make, and the choice you make determines which of two distinct pathways you will travel.



The only question you need to ask when someone has harmed you is whether you will forgive that person or not. In fact, to make this easier to remember, simply remind yourself of how Shakespeare might have posed this question: “to forgive or not to forgive, that is the question.”

When you react to someone, you give that person control over your life. Choosing to forgive is choosing to stay in control and not let someone else have the keys to your life. Do not give up your choice to forgive for the false imitation of blame. For in the first story of suffering and loss ever recorded, both Adam and Eve resorted to blame to deal with their circumstances rather than choosing forgiveness.

Some of us have trouble forgiving because we have a faulty understanding of what forgiveness is. We need a working definition of forgiveness that works. But before I define forgiveness, we must first identify and reject those definitions of forgiveness you may currently hold that are not working. So first, what forgiveness is not:

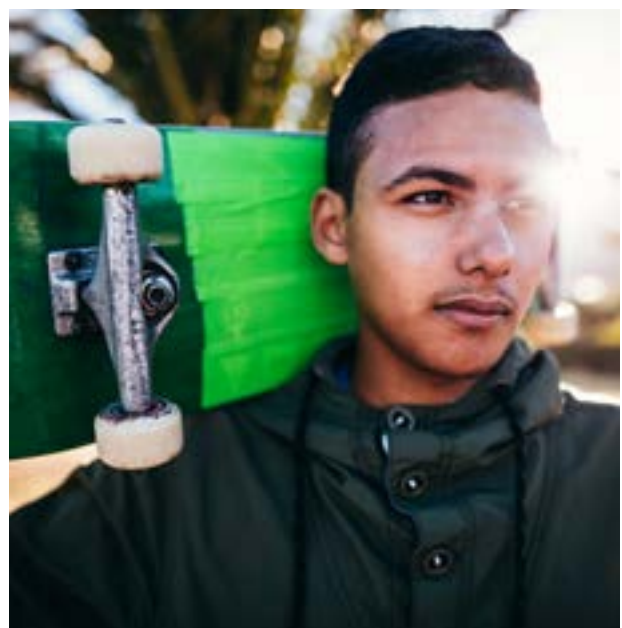
- Forgiveness is not forgetting. To truly forgive someone does not mean you forget that the hurtful incident ever happened. Some people mistakenly believe they have not forgiven because they still remember the wrong done to them. But forgiveness is not forgetting! Take my story, for example. What would happen if I forgot the incident of my firing? I would most likely go back to work the next day as I usually did. Why wouldn't I? I would have forgotten that I got fired. Sounds silly, doesn't it? Can you imagine if I went back to work? What would others have thought about me? No, you can remember exactly how someone injured you, but you can still forgive the person from your heart. Forgiveness is not forgetting; forgiveness is remembering in a different way.

He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must travel.

- Forgiveness is not excusing another's hurtful action. Forgiveness never makes a wrong right. Just the opposite, forgiveness is necessary only when a wrong has occurred. So to forgive someone is not so much letting them off the hook for what they did as letting yourself off the hook for what was done to you.
- Forgiveness does not negate restitution. The fact that someone has taken something away from you does not mean that you give up your right for recompense. While forgiveness will help you let go of the negative feelings you harbour, you still have the right to pursue legal or moral ways to recapture what you have lost. But I offer one word of caution: all debts are not easily translated into tangible returns. So you may never be able to fully recover all that you lost. At some point, you may need to cut your losses and move on, which in reality gives you more gain than holding out for something that will most likely never happen.
- Forgiveness does not require reconciliation. It would be nice if forgiveness always resolved issues and brought people back together. And while reconciliation is possible with forgiveness, it is not required. This makes sense, for it takes two people to reconcile, but only one to forgive.

Forgiveness is something I can do; reconciliation is possible only if we both desire it. Reconciliation requires that the trust that was violated be rebuilt, step by step, for while forgiveness is free, trust must be earned. Yet I can benefit by forgiveness no matter what the other person chooses to do. Therefore my ability to forgive does not depend on another's actions.

But if forgiveness is not pardoning, condoning, excusing, forgetting, denying, or even reconciling, then what is it? How can genuine forgiveness be defined and understood so that it can do its amazing work of healing in your life?





Here's the definition of forgiveness I use:

Forgiveness is the process of re-framing one's anger and hurt from the past, with the goal of recovering one's worth in the present and revitalising one's purpose and hopes for the future.

When you look closely at this definition, you'll see that the forgiveness process can be divided into three distinct phases:

- Phase 1: How I handle the memories of painful things said and done to me in the past
- Phase 2: How I overcome the negative emotions I feel right now
- Phase 3: How I free myself from a hurtful past to achieve my desired future

This definition also makes clear that forgiveness is not a one-time act of saying the words; rather, it is a process that takes place over time.



This series has been designed to help you understand and practice these necessary steps of forgiving. Without covering the full range of past, present, and future, your forgiveness will be incomplete, making it much more difficult for you to experience a full and satisfying life.

Congratulations! If you have read this far, I assume you have decided to get off the pathway of blame and shame and choose forgiveness instead. So what is the first step you need to take in order to forgive? The first step of forgiveness is to choose to forgive. Choose to forgive, even when you do not feel like doing so. Choose to forgive, even when the other person does not deserve to be forgiven. Choose to forgive, even when the other has not asked for forgiveness. Forgiveness does not depend on what the other person may or may not do; forgiveness is your choice.



What we call the secret of happiness is no more a secret than our willingness to choose life.

*Forgiveness means that even though you are wounded,
you choose to hurt and suffer less.*

In fact, every time something happens to you, you have a choice to make. You will either make a conscious choice or you will make an unconscious choice. The primary difference has to do with whether you think before you act. A conscious choice occurs when you stop and think before you act, and an unconscious choice occurs when you react before you think. Keep in mind that reactions are nothing more than acting out your old habits.

I want you to experience the power of habit. Fold your hands together by lacing your fingers. Now look to see which thumb is on the top. Half of the world will have the left thumb on top, and the other half will place the right thumb on top. How you fold your hands has nothing to do with whether you are right-handed or left-handed.

The way you fold your hands has to do with a choice you made as a child. When your parents instructed you to fold your hands, they never told you how to do it and which thumb to place on the top. But once your habit was formed, you've done it the same way every time without even thinking about it.

When I asked you to fold your hands, did you think about which thumb to place on top? Of course not; you simply did what came most natural to you, which is what you had done so many times before.



Now I want you to try an experiment. Fold your hands together, but this time place your opposite thumb on top. Now hold it like that for a moment. Do you sense how awkward this feels? Like any change, it feels awkward at first because you have to consciously think about what you are doing; but over time, you can change an old behaviour and replace it with a new one.

Forgiveness is giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me.

So you may not feel like forgiving today, or it may feel awkward at first, but so what? Remember, you are changing a habit, so stick with it. Choosing to forgive places you on the pathway of forgiveness. It is the first step of the journey, a journey that can be completed only after you make the initial choice to forgive. If you are not ready to forgive at this time, come back to it when you are ready. Every wrong does not have to be forgiven immediately. The pain may be too deep right now.

But every hurt will need to be forgiven at some time if healing is to take place. So the next time someone hurts you, remember you have a choice: to forgive or not to forgive.

To fully grasp the importance of making a conscious choice, let's go back to something we all learned in basic psychology. Do you recall Pavlov's dogs and how they salivated every time the bell rang? That story led to the insight that a stimulus causes a response, depicted in this simple diagram.

STIMULUS ➡ RESPONSE

The problem with this thinking is that it leaves you reacting to everyone else's actions toward you. Rather than being in charge of your destiny, your life is determined by the circumstances surrounding you. You are not an actor but a reactor, living your life in response to what others do toward you.

You have another option. Between stimulus and response, insert a second R that stands for "reflection." In this space is where I choose my life's direction, rather than letting other people choose it for me. Reflecting before acting is choosing your response, as depicted in the following diagram:

STIMULUS ➡ REFLECT ➡ RESPONSE

In this way, forgiveness does not depend on an apology from the offender; rather, forgiveness depends on my choice to forgive. When I forgive, I take responsibility for my life.

Let's take a look at that word responsibility. You can see the meaning of the word in the word itself: response-ability, which is my ability to choose my response.

Your life is defined by the choices you make. You can make good choices or you can make bad choices. But only you can make the choice to forgive. While forgiveness does not change what happened to you, it does change how you feel about what happened and what it means to you. In a real sense, choosing to forgive is choosing to live life your way.

If forgiveness is not on your list of options for



when someone hurts you, why isn't it? When you have been wronged, you have only two possible futures: the life of pain and suffering you don't want (vengeance and victimisation will get you there) or the life of fullness and satisfaction you do want (and forgiveness will get you there).

The biggest obstacle to forgiveness is confusing an unforgivable offense with an unwillingness to forgive.



REVIEWING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

You have only one thing to consider when you hit the fork in the road where you must decide between forgiveness and unforgiveness: which is the better choice for you?

Jerry could not see forgiving Jim as a viable option. Jerry believed that the depth of his pain had forever removed forgiveness from his list of options. But what if Jerry had looked more deeply into his grievance story? What new insights might he have uncovered?

For one thing, Jerry might have realised that he and Jim had not seen each other for almost five years. Yes, they had spoken by phone, but they'd had no face-to-face contact in half a decade. Or Jerry could have learned that Jim's bride wanted a small wedding with only family and local friends.

Since she did not want a large wedding, many genuine friends who did not live near Jim did not receive invitations. Furthermore, would Jerry have grown quite so angry had he realised that he had done many things in the preceding five years without including or even informing Jerry? He bought his first home during that time, for example, yet never mentioned it to Jim. He had developed a serious relationship, yet Jim never even knew the woman's name. Could Jerry see himself marrying and not inviting Jim? No doubt, under the right set of circumstances.

Finally, Jerry needed to realise that Jim had not suddenly become an evil person. In fact, Jim still had a lot in common with Jerry. So why should Jerry let this one event completely change how he saw Jim?

1. How might all-or-nothing thinking be affecting Jerry's view of Jim?

2. In what ways might a more realistic view that both good and bad things happen in life change Jerry's grievance story about Jim? Be specific.

3. Why might Jerry believe he can't even call Jim and talk about this incident?

4. What might be some advantages and disadvantages of calling Jim? List them below.

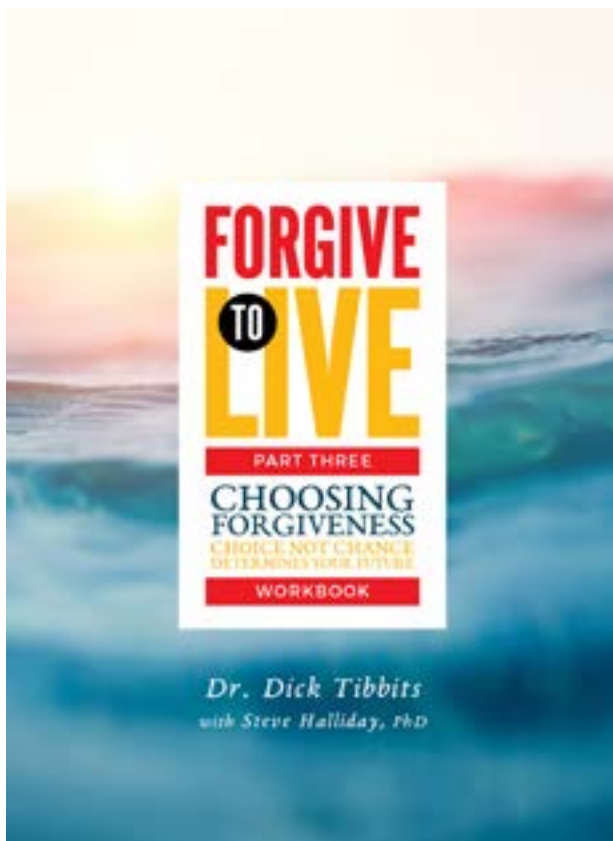
5. While Jerry believes he has no choice but to avoid Jim, what alternative choices do you see?

6. Jerry may not be ready to forgive Jim right now, but what could Jerry do that might make forgiveness a more likely option in the future? Be specific.



Thanks for completing these Reflect questions in Part 3 of the Forgive to Live booklet.

If you would like to discuss your Reflect answers with one of our Hope Channel Community Managers and/or continue your forgiveness journey by receiving Part 4, please email discover@hopechannel.com or call 1300 300 389.



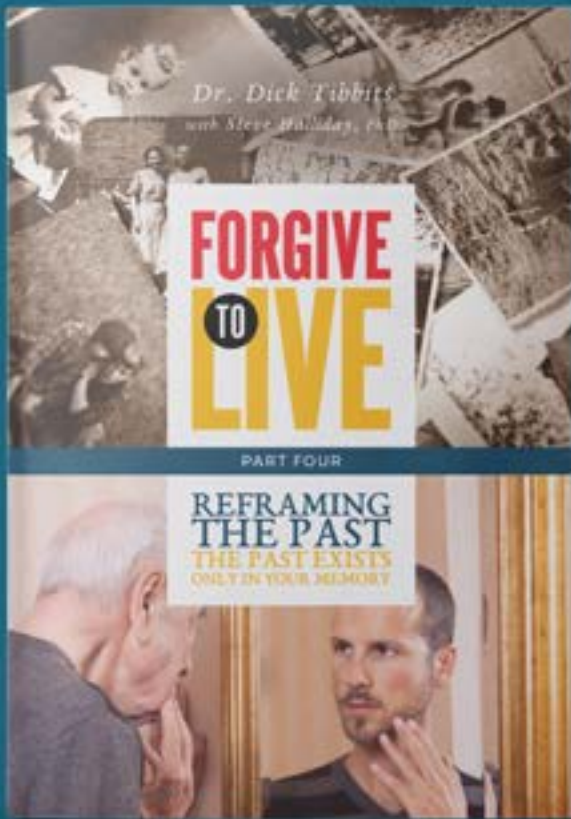
FURTHER REFLECTION

Throughout this topic, you've had the opportunity to reflect on a specific case study and reflect on what it means to choose to forgive.

We have explored what forgiveness is - and what it isn't. Forgiveness is a choice - your choice. By choosing to forgive, you can find freedom.

Through the accompanying workbook, you will now have the chance to take what you've just read and apply it to your own story so that you can experience the real difference forgiveness can make in your own life.

The workbook is for your own personal use - and we encourage you to use it in order to get the most benefit from this series.



PART 4: REFRAMING THE PAST

Forgiveness does not change the facts of what has happened to us - but it does have the power to change our perspective. Learn how to reframe your perspective in Part 4 of the Forgive to Live series. Email or call HopeChannel to receive your copy and to continue in your forgiveness journey.



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