

Forgiving What You Can't Forget Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Forgiving What You Can't Forget* teaches you how to heal from past traumas that still haunt you today by going through the lessons that author Lysa TerKeurst learned from childhood abuse and an unfaithful spouse, which have helped her find peace even in tough situations by forgiving those who have wronged her.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Have you ever been so upset about something someone did to you that you didn't think you'd ever be able to forgive them? Maybe you feel stuck in an endless cycle of pain, and you replay offences over and over in your mind. You know you can't continue this way, but you don't know how to move on.

Lysa TerKeurst felt this way when she discovered that her husband was cheating on her. But through this difficult life experience and childhood trauma, she found surprising ways to let go of the resentment that comes when someone hurts you and doesn't make it right.

In her book, *Forgiving What You Can't Forget: Discover How to Move On, Make Peace with Painful Memories, and Create a Life That's Beautiful Again*, TerKeurst teaches you that it's time to stop suffering over the things other people have done to you. Using deep empathy, Bible teachings, and insights, she teaches you how to find peace again finally.

Here's the book summarized in just 3 lessons:

1. Being overly optimistic is just one of the many coping mechanisms that make it harder to deal with your traumas.

2. To forgive, follow the three-step process of collecting, connecting, and correcting the dots of your past.
3. Forgiveness is a process, not an event.

Let's jump right in and see how much we can learn!

Lesson 1: Dealing with your traumas is harder if you try to be too optimistic about them.

People who experience pain will often do things that numb it rather than face it. Some people might choose drugs, alcohol, or casual sex. Other people try to cover up the pain by being overly positive, so they can convince themselves that they are okay.

The author chose the latter. She would keep telling herself everything was okay and that she forgave her unfaithful husband. Her therapist saw through this. He told her that she was using positivity and hyper-spiritualization to cover up her real feelings. She wasn't dealing with the pain.

The fact is, coping strategies like turning to drugs or being overly positive only help temporarily. These only cover up the pain and don't improve our circumstances. We can't live in a state of denying our feelings, or our situations will never improve. To heal, we need to face reality. **If we look at the pain head-on, we can decide how to move forward and heal.**

The author says having a counsellor helped her finally start the healing process. The counsellor identified that the author was making many hyper-spiritual statements that we're making it hard to heal. Saying things like, "God will eventually make everything all right," allowed her to continue living life without really forgiving.

She realized that in avoiding forgiving her husband, she wasn't allowing herself to move on. Only once she started looking at the past and understanding the traumas that were there, she finally started to heal.

Lesson 2: Collect, connect, and correct the dots of your past if you want to receive the healing power of forgiveness.

To start your learning process, forgive and let go; first, you need to do what the author's therapist called *collecting the dots*. This means looking back at the things in your past that shape your views now.

TerKeurst revisited memories such as living with a single mom and having an absent father. At one point, she was repeatedly abused by a babysitter who warned her never to tell anyone, so she kept the abuse a secret. Eventually, she had trouble trusting anyone, and especially men.

After collecting these dots, she realized forgiveness isn't just about the present. It's often uncovering the things that happened long ago that affect us even now. After doing this, she next learned to *connect the dots*.

TerKeurst found that forgiveness wasn't just about revisiting her traumatic past; it was about revising her belief systems. Her past left her with a distrust of men, and the man she finally made an exception to trust, her ex-husband Art, betrayed her trust. **She realized that if she forgave Art, she would have to forgive all the other men who had hurt her in her life.**

Lastly, she began to *Correct the Dots*. This means examining all of your beliefs that come from your past experiences and making sure they are all good and positive.

To do this, she looked at the people in these shaping stories of her life. Then she tried to determine the negative things she was still carrying inside about them. When a specific person brought out negative emotions, she tried to reframe them more positively and imagine what good would come from forgiveness. Then she would read verses of the Bible that illustrated that God doesn't waste suffering and there is a purpose for it.

After this, she would ask what a healthy version of herself would be empowered to do, and she wrote down answers in her journal. In doing these things, she began to be able to correct her perspectives finally.

Lesson 3: Forgiveness doesn't happen in one moment. It takes time.

Have you ever heard anyone say that forgiveness isn't a destination but a process? TerKeurst believes this. Often we will be doing pretty well, but when we're triggered, pain can come flooding back to the surface.

If you find yourself in this situation, you can rest assured that it's okay and your progress isn't wasted. **Every trauma will bring both an initial and long-term impact, which is all part of the forgiveness journey.**

Though the affair was many years ago now, the author talks about times when bad memories can resurface or be triggered by what someone says. This pain is part of the long-term impact.

The author's strategy for this is to figure out the triggered feeling and then determine what to do with it. For example, if she sees a picture from a hard time for her, she allows herself to grieve what she lost for a few moments.

From this, she can also gauge the sentiment she has toward the person involved, whether this is good, bad, or neutral. In doing this, she can discern whether or not she needs to discuss her feelings with this person or whether she can work through it in her journal.

She reassures us that all of this is just part of the forgiveness process. There might not be an exact moment when you let go. But every day on this journey should bring you closer and closer to resolution.

Forgiving What You Can't Forget Review

Whoa, I'm blown away by *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. It's an amazing book that goes far beyond your typical advice about trauma and forgiveness. I'm excited to start using these principles, and I feel confident that they'll work for me and for you too!

Who would I recommend the *Forgiving What You Can't Forget* summary to?

The 31-year-old with mental health issues who can't seem to let go of her past, the 69-year-old that's going through a divorce, struggles with the pain, and anyone who wants to find healing in forgiveness.