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Forgiveness Case Study

In 1997 I was arrested and sent to prison. I was convicted and after 8 months in the county jail I was sent to upstate prison in New York. I was turned in by my grandfather and for many years I had no forgiveness toward him. I blamed him for my incarceration. In 1998 a little more than a year later I found myself surrendered to the power of Jesus while facing new charges for inciting a riot and refusing to comply with the sergeants. I knew that I was an inmate and I would rather be beat up everyday than to comply with correction officers in the prison. That way at least when inmates spoke of me they wouldn't say I was a "snitch". They would instead say, "he got jumped but he never talked," or something like that. I lived by a code.

After receiving Christ, I knew I would have to eventually face my feelings toward my grandfather. At first I thought I would be able to get by because I was a new creation in Christ. By 2000 the Lord began to really speak in to my heart about letting my grandfather go. He didn't owe me anything but I thought that he did. I felt he should suffer because I'm suffering. But, as I learned to wait on the Lord I felt the assurance that I was to blame. I'm not a saint. I am in need of forgiveness and Christ according to His great mercy has already forgiven me, so I too should forgive my grandfather. So I prayed to forgive him.

In 1999 I was a part of a workshop facilitated by Quakers called, "Alternatives To Violence Project." During my time in AVP I learned about how to transform my energy from rage to non violence. The workshop taught us how to take deep breaths and allow time for grace. In AVP I learned how to take responsibility for the results of my life. I had the opportunity to

either grow in being a violent young man or I could take that energy and channel it toward something redemptive. As a Christian I knew that I could dedicate my life to provide forgiveness and offer hope to those who don't see a way out.

In 2018, my grandfather was dying. I had the opportunity to see him before his passing. While I was with him I shared my life with him. I shared that I loved him and that I had forgiven him. He squeezed my hand. That was how he expressed approval during that time in his life. He was on life support and was battling a vicious version of cancer. He was removed from dialysis and was given hours to live.

During that time with my grandfather, I enjoyed my time with him. I was sad that I didn't have this time sooner. I had already forgiven him years ago. My grandmother said that he had forgiven me years ago as well. I just couldn't see him or spend time with him. I learned that although I had forgiven him that didn't mean I had to be around him or force myself to be ok with him. It was too painful. I felt that was more important than faking a smile or pretending like the years of my life spent in prison didn't hurt. I had to be honest. I loved my grandfather, but that time in my life I would never get back. It was my fault after all.

In closing, I saw that it's imperative that I forgive those that have wounded me. I need to forgive because Christ has forgiven me. I have to forgive because it's good for my soul. It's not the Lord's will for us to harbor guilt, shame, unforgiveness toward anyone, especially ourselves.

I still need to grow in conflict resolution or restoration but I'm proud of myself and my grandfather that at the time of his passing there wasn't anything between us. We could be in the moment and love each other with our whole hearts.