

Forgiveness Case Study

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In the beginning I was thinking of Eddie, for this forgiveness case study. Eddie was the one who raped me and I suffered life threatening situation with ectopic pregnancy. But after a closer look, a case study of my sister-in-law, Sarah, is much more suitable for this paper, it was more complex and involved 5 adults, and lots of emotions. My mom and dad never said sorry to Sarah nor received an apology from Sarah. Regardless, I thank God and can give testimony that God does miracles and our relationship with Sarah is reconciled and healed. In-laws drama is a common issue across eastern and or western culture. I was naïve and hoping our family will be an exception, but turned out not to be the case. My brother started to date Sarah online, and things moved quickly, after 4/5 months of talking online, my brother flew to China, asked Sarah's parents for permission, got married in China, and brought Sarah home. At the same time his job was moving him from New York to Florida, and my brother bought a house in Florida. In a matter of 2 weeks major life events were unfolding for my brother. Sarah and brother flew back to NY, stayed with us 2 nights and off they went to Florida. It was too fast to register, to adjust, to talk, or to get to know one another, and it crushed my parents in the process.

The anger, hurt, unspoken, and unmet expectations from my parents and from Sarah was too intense and at that time I had zero hope. My mom started to lose weight dramatically, my dad was so bitter and angry, Sarah had no respect or honor for my parents, and my brother was just too busy and failed as a facilitator or leader. As someone in the middle, I understand how my parents felt, and how Sarah felt toward my parents. We came to learn that Sarah told my brother he has to ask permission from her to talk to either my parents or me. I was shocked how insecure Sarah was despite being a Christian. As weeks and months passed, three of us felt we lost our son/brother. I was angry at Sarah, I don't know how she convinced my brother to make big decisions (within 2 weeks) without telling my parents or me. The more hurt I saw from my parents, the more I became resentment toward her.

I told God, I am so hopeless and I don't know what to do and I don't want my parents to suffer like this anymore. That's when God told me to lead as an example, take the role of a forgiver. It was not easy for me to forgive Sarah, for the pain she caused my parents and my brother. And initially it was not the love for her that moved me to forgive her, it was for the sake of my parents' health (physically, mentality, emotionally) I chose to obey God. Since that time, I pay close attention and consciously steer my parents and myself away from "symptoms of unforgiveness". And keep on reminding ourselves what Jesus said to Peter "seventy times seven" and how God will deal with us if we fail to forgive. Seven months gone by, we decided to visit them. With approval from Sarah, she set the dates of visit even though she was just a stay-at-home wife. We yielded, and three of us adjusted our work and schedule to fit the dates Sarah set. And I thank God for softening my parents' hearts, to yield.

The moment, the biggest test was ahead of me, and I thank the Holy Spirit for leading me through it. While we were there, Sarah would say things that were very inconsiderate and sometimes rude, and my parents would just take it in without retaliation. My mom would cry afterward, my dad would be angry, then my brother would come up to us and apologize on her behalf, this went on continually from day 1 of visit to day 3. I prayed, cried, and wrote to God both nights, because I started to see Sarah's heart condition and it discouraged me from any hope of reconciliation. One day of the visit, Sarah continued with her usual talk, the conversation was about how fat we are and because we do weekly meals prep instead of cooking fresh every meal, she said we are lazy people. There I was listening to her dishonoring us, I said to the Holy Spirit, "now what Lord, what do You want me to say, how do you want me to respond, I am speechless." And to my surprise He gave me words, I responded to Sarah, "It is wonderful that your parents can cook fresh meals three times a day. That's a very loving thing to do. However, all of us work, and for us weekly meal prep is a time of joy and love, we go grocery shopping, we think and talk what we would like to eat for this week, because our lifestyle is different, we wake up go to work and next time we see each other is dinner time 6 or 7. It's different from you, but it works for us." I didn't respond to her in a pass-aggressive way nor sarcastically, I had this peace and love in me, given to me by the Holy Spirit. My words were said in a loving way, and it changed the situation. And I felt victorious! My parents were listening in on the conversation, and they were shocked how calm and loving I was in my response, and they also heard a shift in Sarah tone afterward. That was the very first win for us, a pivotal moment for our relationship with Sarah. I was surprised by what I said as well, because it was not the flesh in me but it was the power of the Holy Spirit at work and proving I am not a slave to unforgiveness. Most importantly, it was a defining moment for my parents to witness how loving, beautiful, freeing, and joyful it is not to take offense and to forgive. I had a conversation about it with my parents afterward, and they said they wanted to do the same, because I know they were exalted emotionally, physically, and mentally and they witnessed the best way out was to be led by the Holy Spirit into a true forgiveness. We continue to love Sarah the best we could, the LORD has His way of humbling Sarah and disciplining my brother. Six months after Sarah gave birth to Enoch, first child, COVID hit and my brother lost his job in May. They found themselves in a very difficult situation, a year and a half in marriage, a house to mortgage, 6 months of baby, with no income. It was very difficult to watch them suffer, but the Lord really turned things around in the marriage. Aside from praying for them we financially supported them about \$1,000 to \$2,000 per month, until my brother got a new job in December. Sarah's heart was softened, and the best gift of forgiveness is that now we are loved and welcomed by her and she called my parents "mom" and "dad" in a sincere and loving way.