

Forgiveness Changes Lives

By Kit Coons



I met my husband, Drew, as Cru staff in Africa. In the 1980s, a Muslim government controlled Nigeria. They didn't welcome Christian missionaries. Not even America's Peace Corps was welcome. But the Muslim government accepted teachers regardless of their religion. To get missionaries into Nigeria, Cru found a job for me as an instructor at Gindiri Teacher's College.

Drew came later as an engineer. Cru found a job for him working for the Nigerian government as the maintenance engineer for water supplies in 19 towns. While we were getting to know each other, Drew had a remarkable experience that God used to shape our lives.

Responding to a difficult situation

When Drew started his assignment, only one station was pumping water. The other eighteen had all broken down for lack of maintenance or spare parts. Hundreds of people were dying of cholera, typhoid, and other waterborne diseases.

Drew started by organizing the mechanics and electricians and setting up a workshop. Gradually he and the Nigerians working for him brought every station into service. People came running with buckets and bottles to fill with fresh water. Children shrieked and laughed as if the water was candy.



However, a few of the Nigerians felt jealous of Drew's success. One, a man whom Drew had replaced, went to the water department's headquarters and reported some terrible and untrue things about him. At the time, Drew was sick from malaria and dysentery and still trying his best. The man had made Drew's job harder.

Drew told me, "I found myself hating this man and even hoping he would die. Then I thought - you are a Christian missionary. How can you justify hating anyone?"

Being willing to forgive changed life forever



As an act of faith, Drew deliberately forgave this man. He decided to take no steps to retaliate. Furthermore, he would give the man a blessing. "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with a blessing." (1 Peter 3:9, NIV)

Drew started to go out of his way to be nice, even doing favors and speaking well of the man in front of other people. God softened this man's heart, and he and Drew began to get along.

Several other Cru staff and Drew organized an outreach. This former adversary attended and committed his life to Christ. Drew said later, "Never have I seen God change a man so fast. He left the meeting and stopped each person he met, saying, *'I just became a Christian.*

You can become one, too.'"

The ability God gave Drew to forgive made this man's life change possible. Forgiveness is a command from God so Christians can represent Him well, and yet—it is also a privilege given to make our lives better. US News & World Report magazine conducted research about happiness. They reported that the single most important factor for whether a person leads a happy life is the ability to forgive others. Somebody once said, "Failing to forgive is like drinking poison and hoping the other person will die."

The blessings of forgiveness

Drew brought this experience into our relationship. He made forgiveness and giving a blessing our policy toward others, especially toward each other. We have seen the policy give us peace in difficult situations with others. And even when people would not respond positively, Drew and I have the joy of knowing we did the godly thing.

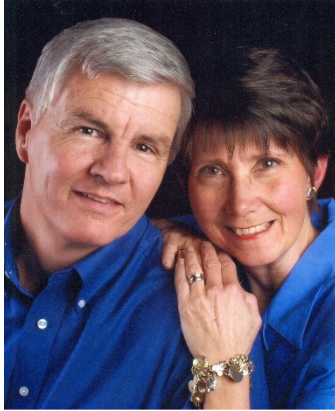


Admittedly, sometimes when I am hurt or mistreated, forgiveness seems impossible. When this happens, I first remember Jesus' death for me. Then I consider His Word: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32) Then by faith, I make a prayerful decision to forgive that person and not take any steps to punish them. Finally, I deliberately do good for them. I've found that my own heart softens as I serve them as a person for whom Christ also died.

The ability God gives us to forgive and give a blessing has changed both Drew's and my lives.

Ask the Lord if there is someone in your life who needs your forgiveness. What steps is He leading you to take?

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Kit and Drew Coons have been married for 40 years. They met as Cru staff in Nigeria and later served in the U.S. and New Zealand with [FamilyLife](#).

Kit and Drew are authors of [The Challenge Series](#) - five wholesome seeker-friendly novels; [The Ambassadors](#) - A scientific tale seemingly taken from today's headlines; and six [biblical life-skills books](#) on difficult topics.

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