

APPENDIX

FORGIVENESS

Sample forgiveness letter:

Dear Dad,

For the last several years I've been thinking about our relationship as father and son. I've been reviewing my life to see if I could understand more and heal some hurts. As I did this, I recalled some specific events between us where I felt I didn't measure up or belong. These memories have hurt me, even though I realize that you probably did not intend for this to occur.

Before I share these memories, I want you to know how proud I am of you. Your commitment to people has been a positive challenge to me. The tenacity with which you pursue life is quite contagious—people really want to follow you. Yet in the midst of this, I have been troubled by memories that have created distance between us. I want to resolve these things and improve our relationship. So, if you could indulge me for a bit, I'd like to review these memories. And I want you to know that I forgive you.

I remember my 9th grade final report card. It had 3 Bs and 1 C. I had brought up my grades after being really distracted. I felt hopeful and pleased. I had turned a corner. But you were angry at my entire year and told me I was a failure. I felt then that no matter how well I performed, you would always push me to do more. I felt you wanted me to do and be what you wanted instead of encouraging me to pursue my own dreams. Would I

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ever measure up? I needed your praise at that moment. Later, when I had chosen to try out a few different classes in college (and admittedly wasn't shaving much or taking great care of myself), you took me out to lunch and interrogated me. I was surprised, and when you pressed questions about why was I looking the way I did and what my strategy in life was, I was unable to respond. You left with some tough words of resentment as you shoved the table away. I felt shoved away, just like that table. With just that action, you communicated disappointment and disapproval that lingers with me still. I see this played out in my own life as an inability to deal with the expectations of others, especially those in authority.

Dad, I really regret that it has taken me this long in life to begin to come to grips with our relationship. But now that I am a dad myself, I am learning how hard it is and how I now want to move forward. You have provided for me better than you were provided for yourself. You supported me in college, and celebrated my success at my first job. You have warmed up to me in the last few years. I'm thankful for these choices to connect. In fact, I am sorry I wasn't a better son myself. I know some of my choices threatened you and confused you. I seemed not to be able to talk about them with you either. So know I forgive you. I am willing to reach out more and be a son. I am excited to watch God unfold his perfect plan for your life and my own.

Thanks for reading this letter and for letting me express these past and powerful emotions.

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Some forgiveness resources:

Book: *Forgive and Forget* by Lewis Smedes

Book: *Forgiving the Dead Man Walking* by Debbie Morris
(with Gregg Lewis)

Crossroads weekend message: *The Art of Forgiveness:
Forgiving Others* (June 2001 interview
with Debbie Morris; search "forgiveness" at
<http://www.crazychurch.com>.)

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