**Ecclesiastes 3:10-15**

**10I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. 11God has made everything suitable for its time; more over God has put a sense of past and future: eternity, into our minds, yet, we cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. 12I know that there is nothing better for us than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we live; 13moreover, it is God’s gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. 14I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before Love. 15That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by.

Psalm 62: 1-2, 5-7**

**1For God alone my soul waits in silence;
    from God comes my salvation.
2God alone is my rock and my salvation,
    my fortress; I shall never be shaken.**

**5For God alone my soul waits in silence,
    for my hope is from God.
6God alone is my rock and my salvation,
    my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
7On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
    my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.**

 **Romans 8: 28a, 33b-35, 37**

**28We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, called according to God’s purpose. It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. 5Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 37No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through God who loves us. 38For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Luke 10:25-28**

**25Just then an attorney stood up to test Jesus.[**[**j**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+10&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25381j)**] “Teacher,” what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 26Jesus said, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” 27The attorney answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” 28And Jesus said to the attorney, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”**

**Love.
God is Love; Love is God.
Love is Constant; and our Center.
It is only through Love that we have Life!**

**In Denver, Colorado, there is a church called “House for All Sinners and Saints,” meaning that this worship community is for the sinner-and-saint within. Initially, they all met in a bar. The traditional worship service is chanted by the congregation in four part harmony. Once or twice a year the congregation has a blessing of bikes – meaning motorbikes, bikes, and tricycles. The congregation’s pastora is the author of the recent NYT best-selling books Accidental Saints: Finding God in All the Wrong People and Patrix: the Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint; and she is also known for being the most tattooed pastor in America. One Easter, the Denver Post, covered the story of this tiny congregation, most sporting tattoos, wild haircuts, in a bar, chanting in the early hours of Easter morning, and overnight, this congregation tripled in size. Many of the new people who came were “normal” people and more a part of the “establishment:” bankers, corporate owners, and such. In coming together as new and old, the congregation held space where it was safe to talk about this change and what it meant to be in this congregation. Nate, a transgender person, said in the circle that day: ‘You newbies remind me of my mother and father. Still, your being here is healing because unlike our parents you love us as we are (Wild Goose Festival Interview (Pastor Nadia was also interviewed by The Daily Beast See:** **http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/11/24/can-nadia-bolz-weber-resurrect-liberal-christianity.html)).’ Imagine at the moment of unexpected coming together in an upside-down diversity, all the people present, no matter how loved or unloved in society, chose Love.**

**When Jesus says to our attorney in scripture today, ‘You know right – love God with everything you have, and love all that God has created, and you will live!’ This is the beginning. Yet, how long will it take before Love meets inaction and lethargy, exclusion, rape, robbery, betrayal, marginalization, violence, even death? How long before the need for the process and practices of forgiveness arise?**

**In 2013, Marciel, living in Guatemala, and 81 years old, began praying that if it was his time to go, God help him prepare to go and give him strength to suffer through it. Marciel had testicle and prostrate issues that were causing enormous pain; and his physical suffering could mean cancer. It was in the cold months of December 2015 that Facebook pictures circulated showing Marciel in the hospital in extreme pain. The trip and operation would cost about $4500 which is quite beyond anyone’s budget. Miraculously, LDS Charities and MOSAIC Inter-Faith Ministries gathered monies for tickets and the operation cost; and with the increase in dollar value 8:$1) individuals pitched in the remaining monies for housing and meals. Miracle after miracle happened, including an unexpected upgrade to first class at the start of the trip – Salt Lake City to Los Angeles. When Marciel came through two operations in one week, he lifted his arms with fists and said “Gracias a Dios.” He is physically doing very well today, in his mid-80s, thank God very mucho. So what could need forgiveness in this miracle journey? If any of you have been through family emergencies you can imagine that there were resentments that a brother living in America, and not part of the everyday refugee life in Guatemala, came to ‘the rescue.’ Given poverty dynamics, there is extended family, who continually try to milk a perceived “cash cow.” Not to mention the struggle to have real relationships in the midst of unjust poverty cross-countries. All of this takes a constant supply of fresh forgiveness energy.**

**In the latest Presence, a magazine Spiritual Directors, Trish McBride, offers essential wisdom regarding the rough terrain of forgiveness. Having experience at The Refuge, New Zealand’s most significant domestic violence organization, Ms. McBride, a spiritual director, counselor and chaplain herself, proclaims that sometimes forgiveness is about not forgiving the oppressor. Jesus did not intend for us to give in to oppressive systems over and over again for that would mean love and forgiveness were in constant collusion with abuse, injustice and hate. Jesus’ life was all about confronting the unjust structures and bringing freedom, healing, life. Mcbride’s important truth is that there is a whole spectrum of ways to practice forgiveness. Forgiveness can mean ‘holding out on forgiveness in a loving way’ until there is genuine restoration of ‘justice love’ in daily practices. Forgiveness can mean healing by working toward reconciliation and a transformed relationship. Forgiveness can mean facing the reality of what happened and not resuming the relationship. Forgiveness can mean slowly letting go of anger and bitterness. Forgiveness can mean simply not choosing revenge in words or actions. In fact, the delight of forgiveness is that each situation asks us to pray, think, meditate and come to what forgiveness means in that context, situation, and with the particular person or people.**

**Often, the hardest person to forgive is ourselves. Take Shaka Sengor, who at 17 years old took the life of another young man, father of two young children, in a drug deal that went haywire. Six years later, he receives a letter of forgiveness from the grandmother of the young man he murdered. In the letter, she asks him to know the life he took through her words; and then, she forgives him his action, tells him she loves him, and asks him to change. In his words, her words were a seed that slowly grew and allowed him to know that he is redeemable. In another letter, received while he is in solitary confinement mail call, his son writes, asking him ‘not to murder anymore because Jesus watches what we do.’ His son asks him to: ‘pray and ask Jesus constantly for forgiveness.’ It is here that Shaka has an epiphany, and is transformed by his son’s words with the desire to be a father that has turned his life toward the good; rather than away from it. He begins to spend time reading meaningful books and writing. When he leaves prison, he is different and begins to work for a constructive reality when he gets out of prison. Shaka was recently been interviewed by Oprah on Super Soul Sunday for his book titled Writing my Wrongs. His book is the story of his 19 year incarceration, 7 of which were spent in solitary confinement, and how he discovered books, meditation, self-examination and the kindness of others – tools he used to confront the demons of his past, forgive the people who had hurt him and begin atoning for the wrongs he had committed. Today, Shakra is teaching through Oprah’s Spiritual classes; and as an educator encourages youth to avoid gangs which bond around destructive brokenness and to instead choose love.**

**To open up to God’s forgiveness and constant love means to know that we are not defined by the worst thing we have ever done or the worst thing that was ever done to us. We are defined by Love. Our Compassionate, All-Loving, God created all life, and knows each hair on our head, powers each cell in our body in absolute and unbreakable love. When we allow this reality in, no matter what, regardless: the power of Love is transformative and exponential. Marianne Williamson, in a Return to Love, writes:**

**“We are all meant to shine as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone. And as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear [and destruction], our presence automatically liberates others.”**

**As God’s very own, ‘We are powerful,’ and Loved ‘Beyond Measure’; and Loved, we overflow with Love beyond measure.**

 **Very Imperfect Person (VIP) Forgiveness/Love Journal:

Definition of Forgiveness: “Unbinding Myself & Others to Have Life” (Lazarus)

Forgiveness as Process:
When I know I’ve done wrong: (I do some of the below in random ways):
Self-Assessment – How do I need to extend love a whole lot better?;
Acknowledge the wrong and feel the impatient sorrow, guilt, and disgust of that;
Restore whatever I can; and recommit myself to individual and collective,
 public and private, practices that wed justice and love;
Let go into God’s hands what has happened (Repeat often);
Know I am always a sinner-and-saint (as are we all) and will need to
 constantly enter this process.
To let go of people or relationships that are about harsh critique andjudgement
 and not about Love, Creativity and Genuine Building-Up.

When others harm me: (I do some of the below in random ways):
Face the reality as I see it. “Deal with it!”
Feel, and in time, and then, release emotions: anger, rage, bitterness, sorrow,
 hurt, fear and disappointment tied to that person, people, situation and/or
 context.
Check the human desire for immediate response; verbal, physical or strategic
 revenge. In time, percolate to what forgiveness is in this situation; and act on
 that as imperfect as it will no doubt be.
If thoughts return to the past, pass-over the person, situation and context into
 the all-encompassing Love of God. (Repeat often)
Recommit myself to individual and collective, public and private, practices
 that wed justice and love.
Let go of people or relationships that are not about Love, Creativity and
 Over-Time Genuine Building-Up.**

**What is your definition; process of forgiveness?**

**Definition of Love:
“God-given loving power between people that gives life; and that cannot be controlled or owned.”

Susan Forward writes about Love in Reclaiming Your Life:

“Loving behavior doesn’t grind you down, keep you off balance, or create feelings of self-hatred. Love doesn’t hurt, it feels good. Loving behavior nourishes your emotional well-being. When someone is being loving to you, you feel accepted, cared for, valued, and respected. Genuine love creates feelings of warmth, pleasure, safety, stability, and inner peace.”

What is your definition of Love?**

**Consider a Daily Journal & Notice Patterns:
What gave me Life today? (When did I see God?)
When did I experience Love today? (When did I see God?)
When did I feel demonic forces sucked Joy, Love and Life from me today?
 How can I disallow this? What can I change? What is beyond my ability to
 change?
How do I build up, be more creative, spend my time well?
What do I need to forgive? What does forgiveness look like for this person
 (people), in this situation and context?**