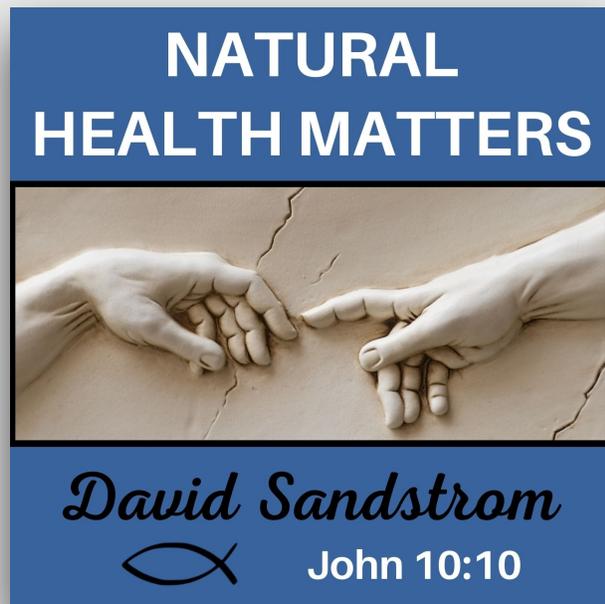


NHM - 70 Spiritual Health part 16: Forgiveness and Your Health

David Sandstrom 0:00

Here's a sample of what you'll hear on this episode of Natural Health Matters. Forgiveness is a big deal to God, because withholding forgiveness rips apart our relationships and destroys our health. Human beings are designed to be in loving, nurturing relationships, loving relationships contribute to vibrant health. And again, that's what the spiritual component to health is all about. Forgiveness is uniquely human, and it is supernatural. Again, Mark Twain said,



forgiveness is the fragrance the rose gives off to the heel that crushed it. Welcome to the Natural Health Matters podcast where it's all about maximizing your health potential, so that you can pursue the abundant life more effectively. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, Naturopathic Doctor, and Biblical Health Coach. And this is episode number 70.

David Sandstrom 0:58

This episode is part 16. In our series on the spiritual component of health. When I first started the podcast, I knew that one day I would produce this episode. And today's that day, and I'm really looking forward to talking with you

today. This is going to be an epic episode, it's going to be a little longer than average with a lot of detail. But don't skip this one because today's topic has the power to set people free. And I believe that some people will be set free by applying the truths that I'm about to share. We're continuing our discussion about secret sins, that can become blocking factors to our health and well being Natural Nation, you know, that we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's natural design for spirit, mind and body, which means we should be pursuing righteousness or right living whenever possible. One of the ways we can get our spirit more in line with God's Spirit is to model something Jesus did in stunning fashion. And that is to forgive the people that have hurt us. Now, these sins are important because any sin reacts upon the sinner, and sin will sear our conscience hardened our hearts, warp our character and corrupt our soul. And you know that what impacts one part of a human being will by necessity alter the other parts for good or bad. So with that said, Remember nurturing the spirit to address our health is all about healthy, loving

relationships, our relationship with God, our relationship with others, and our relationship with ourselves. If we're going to succeed in our relationships with others, we need to practice the art of forgiveness and practice it regularly. John Eldridge said, "Living in community is like a pack of porcupines on a cold night, we need to get close to the warmth. But as we do, we poke each other with our spines." So if we're going to be in good, well functioning, loving relationships, we need to practice forgiveness. Now, a casual reader of the Bible may look at a passage like Matthew chapter six, where the Lord's Prayer says, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And they may recite that in a ritualistic fashion and conclude that we're commanded to forgive so that others may benefit. Although they may benefit indirectly, the primary blessing from forgiveness is for the one who offers it. Louis Smedes, the author of the book, forgive and forget, said this, "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you." That quote reminds me of a promise from the book of Isaiah. "He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to the prisoners." That's Isaiah 61 One. Now, if we fail to offer forgiveness, and we hold on to the grudge, it's going to lead to resentment, anger, and bitterness, which I covered in episode number 67. If you haven't listened to that one. After this, you may want to go back and listen to episode 67. The way we get set free from those types of toxic emotions is by knowing and applying what God's Word says about forgiveness. We don't call these types of emotions toxic emotions for nothing. They have the power to wreak havoc on our physical health and well being. Indulging in toxic emotions like anger and bitterness can lead to unhealthy behaviors such as contention and strife, all of which are harmful to our health and well being in our flesh. It feels good to hold on to the grudge and not offer forgiveness. We think after what they did, they don't deserve it. No one ever does. deserves forgiveness. Forgiveness always goes to the undeserving. That's what makes it a supernatural act. Mark Twain once said, "Forgiveness is the fragrance the rose gives off to the heel that crushed it."

David Sandstrom 5:15

When we hold on to the grudge, resentment is building inside us, all the while festering like a bacterial infection that develops after a root canal, we can't see it from the outside, from the outside, everything looks fine. But underneath, there's a problem developing. And it's not getting any better. It's getting worse. Withholding forgiveness is like drinking poison, and expecting the other person to die. When I was doing some research for my book, The Christians guide to Holistic Health, I came across this story. A woman was once told by her counselor to forgive her ex husband. And her reply was, you don't know what that man did to me, he ruined the last 20 years of my life. And the counselor replied, and he'll ruin the next 20 years of your life if you don't forgive him. If we're really serious about our health, which I know you are, because you're part

of the natural nation, that we've got to get this right, we've got to eliminate this severe form of stress, it's going to take some help from the Holy Spirit to pull this off. We're also going to need a strong commitment to righteousness and our well being.

David Sandstrom 6:28

God takes forgiveness very seriously. There is some powerful language in the Bible concerning forgiveness. Now, in my book in this chapter on forgiveness, I list these verses in recommend that the reader look them up on their own. But here on the podcast, I'd like to take the time to unpack a few of these. Let's start with Matthew chapter 5, verses 23 and 24. "Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go, First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering." Jesus was saying, Get your priorities straight. Don't be so focused on outward behavior, all the while, you've got some inner turmoil that's eating at you from the inside out. Remember, God is in the transformation business. He's not impressed with our observance to some ritualistic behavior when our hearts are not in the right place. Jesus was simply expanding upon the principles set forth in Hosea 6:6 that says, "For I desire, mercy and not sacrifice, in the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Proverbs 21:2 says, "Every man's way is right in his own eyes. But the Lord ways the heart." Genuine forgiveness comes from the heart. It's an inside job. Here's another blunt teaching on forgiveness. "For if you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you did not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." That's Matthew 6, verses 14 and 15. That verse terrifies me. It should be a sobering reminder for all of us just how serious God is about forgiveness. Here's another similar passage. "Do not judge and you will not be judged, and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned pardon, and you will be pardoned." That's Luke 6:37. Here's some more teaching from Jesus on forgiveness. "Be on your guard, if your brother sins rebuke him, and if he repents forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times saying I repent, forgive him. The Apostle said to the Lord, Increase our faith." That's Luke 17:3 and 4. Jesus apostles, the ones closest to him, were saying, Whoa, you want me to forgive the people that have hurt me and there is no end to that forgiveness? And Jesus says, Yep, that's right.

David Sandstrom 9:13

Jesus, when He walked on the earth was the full manifestation of God himself. And he modeled for us some stunning acts of forgiveness. The Old Testament law was extremely harsh at times. I believe some of these harsh laws and some of the stories like the Great Flood are recorded to illustrate just how serious God is about taking on evil in the world. First Corinthians 10:6 says this. "Now these

things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved." Another one of those harsh examples is found in Leviticus chapter 20, verse 10. In there it commands that anyone committing adultery be put to death. "If there is a man who commits adultery with another The man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer, and the adulterous shall surely be put to death." Now we've got to keep in mind, this seems really harsh, right? And it is. But we've got to remember, the Old Testament law was never designed to be the full picture of God's true heart. It was a mere foreshadowing of God's true heart that is revealed for us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Referring to some of the Mosaic Law, the apostle Paul says this, "Therefore, no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink, or respect to a festival or a new moon, or a Sabbath day, things which are a mere shadow of what is to come. But the substance, [or the full manifestation] belongs to Christ." That's Colossians, 2, verses 16 and 17. In Galatians, 4:9 Paul refers to the law as quote, "weak and worthless." An excellent example of this principle in action is the story of the woman caught in adultery. Let's pick up that story in John chapter 8 verse 2: "Early in the morning, he [Jesus] came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to him, and he sat down and began to teach them. [So there was a crowd present. Now that's an important point, people were watching, and probably a lot of them] the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. And having set her in the center of the court. They said to him, Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery in the very act. Now in the Law of Moses commanded us to stone such a woman. What then do you say? They were saying this testing him so that they might have grounds for accusing Him." The Pharisees were doing what they quite frequently did with Jesus. They were trying to trick him or set him up. If Jesus said, Let her go, then they'd accuse him of violating the Mosaic Law, and they turned him over to the High Council. If he said Stone her, then they'd accused him of hypocrisy, going against his own teaching on welcoming sinners and the outcasts of society. They were trying to set Jesus up and put them in a no-win situation. Well, as we're about to see, Jesus wasn't going to have any part of that. Let's continue in verse 7. "But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground, but when they persisted in asking him, he straightened up and said to them, He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. Again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and he was left alone and the woman where she was in the center of the court, straightening up, Jesus said to her, Woman, where are your accusers? Didn't know when condemn you? She said, No, one Lord. And Jesus said, I do not condemn you either. Go from now on sin no more." That's John chapter eight, verses 2 through 11. Now one of the points here is, the Pharisees brought the woman only, but the law clearly taught that both the man and the woman were guilty, but they forgot about that. It kind of

shows the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Scribes. I believe Jesus drew this woman into repentance with kindness, and mercy. The Bible doesn't record what Jesus was writing in the dirt. But scholars are great, it was probably the scribes and the Pharisees own nefarious encounters with prostitutes. Tuesday afternoon under the tree. Last week, when your wife was at the market, then one by one they all dropped their stones, and walked away, humiliated and exposed. And Jesus drove home a hugely important teaching for us all. We should forgive, because we ourselves have been forgiven.

David Sandstrom 14:05

And finally, we see perhaps the most shocking act or teaching on forgiveness the entire Bible, when Jesus was unjustly accused, wrongly convicted in a mock trial, bloodied from a brutal beating, been spat upon, sucker punched in the face, given a crown of thorns, had nails driven through his hands and feet, a spear driven into his side and hanging naked on the cross. He asked God the Father, to forgive his executioners. Luke chapter 23, verses 33 and 34 says this: "When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left, but Jesus was saying, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." This is a stunning act of compassion. How was Jesus able to make such a statement, he was able to separate the person from their sin. We're going to get into the concept of separation in just a minute. But for now, I want you to understand this. Forgiveness is a big deal to God, because withholding forgiveness rips apart our relationships and destroys our health. Human beings are designed to be in loving, nurturing relationships, loving relationships contribute to vibrant health. And again, that's what the spiritual component to health is all about.

David Sandstrom 15:33

We don't want to empower our perpetrators. Now, I don't pretend to know all of what's happened to you. Some people have experienced horrific atrocities in unimaginable pain. However, I do know this when we hold on to the past and fail to forgive. We empower our perpetrators to continue to inflict harm toward us, even if they're six feet under. I'm sure that most followers of Jesus Christ know that Jesus came to bring life abundant John 10:10. We must understand, however, that abundant life can only be lived in the present, to withhold forgiveness and hold on to grudges, and allow resentment and bitterness to fester, like open sores is to be living in the past. We let what's been done to us in the past, impact our present negatively. Better to acknowledge that we can't change the past, but we can enjoy the present and shape our future. This puts us in a better frame of mind to offer forgiveness.

David Sandstrom 16:37

Forgiveness is unnatural. If we look to nature and the animal kingdom, we don't see forgiveness. The forest doesn't forgive the lightning bolt for starting the fire. The zebra doesn't forgive the lion for devouring its young. Forgiveness is uniquely human, and it is supernatural. Again, Mark Twain said "Forgiveness is the fragrance the rose gives off to the heel that crushed it." Without God's grace, forgiveness is impossible. It's important to understand the concept of separating the sinner from their sin. Jesus was doing this when he said "Father forgive them for they know not what they're doing." Original human nature is to follow after God and worship Him by doing what he says Adam and Eve had a period of time in the garden when they were without sin, and in perfect communion with God. It wasn't until Satan came along and deceived them that things went awry. We inherited their sin nature. And we are of course accountable for our own actions. However, we must remember that Satan is ultimately behind all sin. Satan and his demons offer us suggestions. We come into agreement with those suggestions and it becomes our sin. Second Corinthians 11:3 says this. "But I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray." If you want to explore more about the spiritual warfare aspect to all this, listen to episode number 57. In this series, I go into spiritual warfare in detail and that one,

David Sandstrom 18:21

When the Apostle Paul is describing his personal struggle with his sin, He tells us not once, but twice, that it may be him committing the act, but that's not the real him. "So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." Romans 7:17. But if I'm doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." It's Romans 7:20. When I was in college, and the teacher was doing a review for the final exam, and they did a little foot stopping. I took good notes because that was a point of emphasis and probably going to see that again. Well, the same is true here. He Apostle Paul does a little foot stopping by repeating himself about this concept of separation. Paul's true heart wants to follow after God. But he's acknowledging that sometimes sin gets the best of him. He knows that when he finds himself in sin. It's not the real Paul. Sin is not his identifying characteristic anymore. And it's not ours either. As followers of Jesus Christ, we've been given new hearts. Ezekiel 36:26 says this. "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you and I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." And then in 2 Corinthians 5:17, we see this. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things passed away the behold new things have come." A proper understanding of the concept of separating the person from their sin is critical to forgiveness. This is how God gives us the grace to forgive others when they clearly don't deserve it. Separation is what makes the impossible possible. The truth is, no one ever deserves forgiveness. Forgiveness always goes to the undeserving. And it's a good thing it does because without

God's unconditional, unilateral forgiveness, we're all doomed. "For the wages of sin is death." That's Romans 6:23.

David Sandstrom 20:34

Forgiveness is a matter of stewardship. To illustrate the stewardship aspect of forgiveness. We had the famous economy between Peter and Jesus in Matthew chapter 18. "Then Peter came and said to him, Lord, how often shall my brothers sin against me, and I forgive him; up to seven times? Seven is the number of completion in the Bible. Peter probably thought he was being generous by saying seven times. And Jesus said to him, "I did not say to you up to seven times, but up to 70 times 7, and if he sins against you seven times a day, he turns to you seven times saying I repent, forgive him." That's Matthew 18, verses 21 and 22. Although the Bible doesn't record this, I think it's safe to say that Peter had a specific person in mind when he asked that question, just like us, Peter had someone that he really didn't want to forgive. He was probably saying himself something like, what about the guy that has repeatedly hurt me over and over again? And it's been going on for years? Surely I don't have to forgive him, right? Why do I believe that? Because we all have someone like that in our lives. I also think it's interesting to note that 70 times seven is the number of Jesus used to define the extent of our forgiveness. In other words, it's to be never ending. And this episode happens to be episode number 70 of the podcast. I didn't plan it that way. It just happened. Sometimes God just throws me a little reminder that he's involved in this holy work. And ultimately, he's the one in control. I think of the verse from Proverbs 16, verse 9 that says, "The mind of a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." Isn't that cool?

David Sandstrom 22:27

So Jesus tells Peter, that there is no end to the kind of forgiveness he was talking about. And then to drive the point home even further, he immediately launches into the parable of the unforgiving servant. "For this reason, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who wished to settle accounts with the slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him 10,000 talents was brought to him. [Now 10,000 talents back then, is probably in the neighborhood of several million dollars today. but since he did not have the means to repay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children, and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him saying, Have patience with me and I will repay you everything. And the Lord of that slave felt compassion ever released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him 100 Denari. [100 denarius, probably something like five bucks. We know that he owed the king 600,000 times as much as the servant owed him.] and he seized him, it began to choke him saying, pay back what you owe. So his fellow slave fell to the ground began to plead with Him

saying, Have patience with me and I will repay. But he was unwilling, and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back all that was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved, and came and reported to their Lord, all that had happened. Then summoning him, his Lord said to him, You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me, should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave in the same way that I had mercy on you?" Know, that's a pretty clear teaching that as follows Jesus Christ, we're to offer unconditional forgiveness without limits. And if we have trouble with that, we're not acknowledging the extent of our own depravity, and what our sin cost God and the level of mercy and forgiveness that we've received. There's a lot of reasons why we fail to acknowledge those truths. I think most of them are centered around misunderstandings over just what forgiveness is, and isn't. We'll get into some of those reasons to just a bit. For now understand that forgiveness is a matter of stewardship. Anytime God blesses us, He expects us to use We've been given to bless others. If we've been blessed with financial resources, God expects us to be generous with it. The ability to make money comes from God. "But you shall remember the Lord your God for it is he who was giving you the power to make wealth." That's Deuteronomy 8:18. This is true with everything we've received. Forgiveness is not exempt from this mandate. We're reminded in Luke 12:48. For everyone who has been given much, much will be required. We are to offer forgiveness from grateful hearts, acknowledging that we have been forgiven. It's a matter of good stewardship.

David Sandstrom 25:41

I'd like to share a little bit from the story of Jonah. Most of us remember the story of Jonah from our Sunday school lessons about Jonah being swallowed by the whale. But there's an important lesson from Jonah's life for all of us on forgiveness. Jonah was the reluctant prophet that God wanted to use to bring forgiveness and revival to the town of Nineveh. Jonah knew that the Ninevites deeds were wicked, and he hated them for it. The last thing Jonah wanted was for God to offer them mercy and forgiveness. when Jonah preached his message and the Ninevites repented, and God relented from his displeasure towards Ninevites, Jonah became angry, and with his heart filled with bitterness, Jonah said: "Therefore now Oh, Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better for me than life." That's Jonah 4:3. Jonah would rather die than forgive. He was losing the battle for his thought life. He had forgotten that he was also offered mercy and forgiveness from God in therefore in the same boat as the Ninevites.

David Sandstrom 26:52

There's a lot of misconceptions surrounding this particular virtue. The enemy of our souls wants to keep us imprisoned in our own misguided presuppositions

regarding forgiveness. For that reason, I feel it's important to define upfront what forgiveness isn't. forgiveness isn't excusing the person. This is probably one of the most common reasons why people resist forgiving others. We tend to think if we forgive them, then we're saying that what they did was okay. This is a false belief. We don't minimize or explain away what someone's done. We don't make excuses. We say what they did was wrong, it hurt us. And it matters. The very fact that forgiveness is necessary, acknowledges the fact that there has been a wrong committed. forgiveness isn't letting go of accountability. Someone may have broken the law, and there may be legal repercussions for what they've done. And please understand, no one ever gets away with their sin. I said at the top of the show, sin reacts upon the sinner. It sears our conscience, hardens our hearts, warps our character, and corrupts our soul, and much of that damage is permanent. Forgiveness isn't denying reality. We may have to change the way we relate to that person. And we may have to establish some clear boundaries. Forgiveness isn't letting offenses recur again and again. We don't just pretend it didn't happen and continue to subject ourselves to the abuse. Tolerating abuse is not loving ourselves, well. Forgiveness isn't being a martyr. We shouldn't become doormats because we've forgiven someone; the behavior needs to stop, and if it doesn't, then we need to remove ourselves from that environment. Forgiveness isn't based on other people's actions or attitudes. No one earns our forgiveness. We offer it unilaterally, regardless of what they do or fail to do. Our offering of forgiveness is a one way street. Now, someone might say, well, I'll forgive them when they apologize. If we hold on to that belief as a prerequisite to our forgiveness, it'll stop us dead in our tracks. Which leads to the next point. Forgiveness isn't conditional. We shouldn't ever put conditions on our forgiveness. Conditional forgiveness is an oxymoron. We forgive even if they never repent or ask for it. Forgiveness isn't stuffing the hurt. Feelings buried alive never die. We need to feel the hurt, process that emotion and let it go. We don't stuff it. forgiveness isn't believing Time heals all wounds. Wounds inflicted on us in childhood can linger for a lifetime. For some of the more significant offenses, we may need counseling, but going through the forgiveness exercise that I'm about to share with you can go a long way towards inviting Jesus into those broken areas of our hearts in healing them. Forgiveness isn't a feeling. If we wait until we feel like forgiving, it'll likely never happen. Forgiveness isn't reconciling. Reconciliation may take place after forgiveness is offered, but it may not. For reconciliation to take place, the perpetrator must repent and be willing to change. We can and should provide forgiveness without expecting anything in return. Forgiveness isn't forgetting. We don't have to forget what's been done to us to forgive, we likely will remember, but forgiving from the heart allows us to remember the event with grace. When we forgive from the heart, we can recall the event without the pain. Which leads us to the next and final point on what forgiveness isn't. Forgiveness isn't dependent on the extent of our pain. We may feel that because our pain is so deep that it's okay to withhold forgiveness. We

feel like we're somehow punishing the perpetrator by withholding forgiveness. This is also not true. They may not even be aware that what they did to us was hurtful. They're fat, dumb and happy. And all the while were miserable and suffering inside. If you care about your health, don't continue in that state. I think we've all done this to some extent. We've got to remember, unforgiveness leads to anger, resentment, and bitterness. We don't call these toxic emotions for nothing. They're toxic to our relationships. They're toxic to our souls, and they're toxic to our bodies. My recommendation is to follow the forgiveness exercise that I'm about to share. But first, let's talk about what forgiveness is.

David Sandstrom 31:52

Forgiveness is our release or letting go. We release them and turn them over to God. We give up our right to retaliate or seek any form of restitution whatsoever. Earlier I said that forgiveness is not letting go of accountability. Yes, in a legal sense, if a judge has issued a restraining order, then that person needs to follow it. If that person has broken the law, they need to face those consequences. But that's not our responsibility. I'm not talking about the legal law here. What I'm talking about is God's natural law, the way he made the universe and the way things work. Because we've released them, we shouldn't have any real desire to be a part of that person's consequences. It should be enough to turn them over to the judge of the universe. What I'm talking about here is an internal release. And this is part of what aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body looks like. We need to get in alignment with God's heart, God's desires in God's design, and that is to offer forgiveness. Forgiveness is a command. It's in the Lord's Prayer. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." It's Matthew 6:12. Forgiveness is yielding to God, the right to take care of justice. Romans 12:19 says: "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, Vengeance is mine. I will repay says the Lord." Forgiveness is giving up anger and allowing God to heal, repay, restore, convict love. Forgiveness is absorbing the cost of debt ourselves, just as God did for us. Again, Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Forgiveness is refusing to extract restitution from our perpetrator in any way, shape, or form. 2 Timothy 4:14 says this, "Alexander the Coppersmith did me much harm. The Lord will repay him according to his deeds." Forgiveness is a choice. We don't wait until we feel like it. We exercise our will and choose to forgive because it's for our own good. Forgiveness is always extended to the undeserving, we said that earlier. Forgiveness is required every time for everything. Remember we talked about the discussion between Peter and Jesus on how many times should I forgive? "Jesus said to him, I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to 70 times 7." It's never ending. Forgiveness is part of our spiritual vitality, which as you the Natural Nation know is connected to our physical vitality, by way of the soul or our minds. Our soul or the mind acts as a bridge between the

spirit and the body. We don't have to forgive. It's our choice. However, our spiritual vitality will suffer and our physical vitality follows. And here's one of my favorite passages. You've probably heard me say it before, but it really applies here. "It's Proverbs chapter 4, verses 20 through 22. "My son, give attention to my words, incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight, keep them in the midst of your heart, for their life to those who find them in health to all their body." So we're not just talking about a spiritual concept alone here. When we get our spiritual condition, right, it impacts our physical vitality. Forgiveness is a process, not an event. After we've forgiven, we may feel some residual pain or resentment. That doesn't mean we hadn't forgiven. Time alone is not enough to bring healing. Healing comes when we make the choice to let go of our right to retaliate and turn them over to God's discipline. Forgiveness is sometimes sought prematurely. In our effort to get over our hurt, we may try to forgive before we're ready. We need time to process things we may even want to seek counsel before moving on. Forgiveness is an inside job. We offer forgiveness from the heart. Again, we mustn't be like Jonah and say I'd rather die than forgive. Not a good place to be.

David Sandstrom 36:23

Everyone's serious about their health needs to spend some time meditating on these truths, I recommend hitting a little rewind button on your device and listening again, I often share these truths with our marriage groups that my wife and I do together. And I can see by looking at people's faces, that this is a big one. And we all have some work to do in this area, including myself. I mean, don't think for a minute that I've got this all down. I'm just simply relaying these truths, I want to give you these tools in your hands, so that you can process this effectively. Withholding forgiveness can lead to anger, resentment, and bitterness. We covered those in Episode 67. These toxic emotions will trigger our stress response, weaken our immune and can lead to tragic health consequences.

David Sandstrom 37:09

So in keeping with my commitment to giving you action steps to take with each episode of the podcast, I want to cover a forgiveness exercise that I created. I'm going to put a PDF download in the show notes, you can grab that download by going to DavidSandstrom.com/70 I recommend doing this exercise with a close compassionate friend or even a professional counselor. When I was doing research for my book, *The Christians guide to Holistic Health*, I came across this quote and it's a really good one. But I don't know, I don't know who said it first. Getting over our painful experiences is much like crossing monkey bars, you have to let go at some point to move forward. The same is true with forgiveness. Remember, forgiveness is a supernatural act, and we'll need God's help. Therefore, we should start with prayer. We asked God to bring to our recollection

the significant events that are keeping us bound and blocking the abundant life he has for us. Remember, Jesus came to set us free, Isaiah 61:1; therefore he wants to help empower us. We should focus on the wounds that came when we were in our early teens because those are our formative years. But it's not limited to that. That could be some hurt that came before then. Or certainly some hurt that came after that it might have been last week as an adult. So use your judgment. But focus on the early teen years, they're very critical. Then go over our list carefully, methodically, one by one, relive the events. Now, this is going to be painful, but it's necessary because it emphasizes that what was done to us was wrong, and it mattered. Allow the hurt to rise up and feel the full extent of the pain. Over the years, we may have become numb to the pain. Although the injury is still with us. We must feel the full extent of the hurt because the level we are able to forgive is tied to the level of pain we've explored. We want our forgiveness to be as complete as we can make it.

David Sandstrom 39:16

For the more serious offenses, especially those inflicted by those close to us. There's therapeutic value in writing a letter. Now don't send this letter. It's for your eyes only. It's meant to bring clarity to the situation. We should explore and vent our true feelings on paper and burn the letter afterwards. Don't send it. We tell them what they did, how much it hurt and why it mattered. We tell them that when they should have been loving us. They wounded us instead. We mustn't rush through this we should take as much time as necessary. Now, remembering that they are flawed human beings to filled with their own brokenness and wounds from the past. By an act of our will, we offer a blessing to them. We do that because it's nearly impossible to feel hostility toward someone when we're praying for them. And it helps to soften our hearts and prepares us to release them. We can use the benediction from Numbers, chapter 6 as a model and say something like this. May the Lord bless them, now insert their specific name in here their proper name in here, may the Lord bless them and keep them. Lord, make your face shine upon them and be gracious to them. Father, lift up your countenance on them and give them peace. Next, out of grateful hearts toward God, remembering that we too are needed forgiveness, don't make the same mistake Jonah made. We tell them we completely forgive them for their offenses toward us. We willingly give up our right to make them pay in any way shape or form for those acts. We release them from any form of recompense or restitution. To the furthest extent possible, we let go of the hurt and turn them over to God. Now that we've forgiven them, it's time to break any unholy soul ties that may exist between us and them. God's Word teaches that we can have healthy attachments to people as well as unhealthy ones. We pray something like this. In the name of Jesus Christ, I break any unholy soul ties that exists between me and this person, I forbid their spiritual warfare to pass from them to me, and I send that warfare back to them and the work Jesus Christ is doing in

their life. This doesn't mean that we're severing all relationship or connectedness with that person. We're simply allowing only the healthy connections that God would be pleased with. Finally, we should bring the cross and the work of Jesus Christ between us and them. And in relational terms, only allow the cross of Christ between us in that person. The biblical reference for that is Galatians 6:15. We may want to tell the person we forgiven them, but usually not. Remember, forgiveness is a unilateral act of the will. It's not dependent upon their response. That person may even be deceased, it makes no difference, we still release them. After we released them, we likely will remember the events. However, we should be able to recall the events with far less pain. Forgiveness for significant hurts is usually not a one and done event. We typically have to go through this exercise over and over, at least in our minds, until we can remember gracefully. Without experiencing that familiar knot in our guts. We may even be able to bless others by sharing how forgiveness helped to set us free. This won't be easy. Remember, this is a spiritual battle. And the enemy gets a lot of bang for his buck, convincing us to hold on to that hurt. He tries to convince us that we're better off if we withhold our forgiveness. He makes us think that we're somehow punishing them by not forgiving. These are all lies from the pit of hell. The truth is the only person we're harming by withholding forgiveness is ourselves. Withholding forgiveness will rob us of our joy, and can put us on the fast track to compromise health.

David Sandstrom 43:23

One last thing to mention on this topic is that some of us need to forgive ourselves. We may have done something that we know was hurtful to others and we keep beating ourselves up with regret, guilt, self-condemnation. This too is unhealthy in it doesn't have to be something you did to someone else. You might not have lived up to your own personal standards you have for yourself, and you keep beating yourself up for that. Now I already mentioned that in Romans seven, the apostle Paul separates himself from his sin. Likewise, we are not our sin. As followers of Christ, sin is not our identifying characteristic anymore, the 2 Corinthians 5:17. The Bible was not written with chapter divisions, and there's a poor chapter division inserted between Romans chapter 7 and chapter 8. It's only after Paul makes the clear distinction in chapter seven, that when he sins, it's not the real him, that he concludes with the first verse of chapter 8: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1. We're new creatures in Christ. Jesus paid the price for our sins past, present, and future. God doesn't condemn us because he looks past our sin and sees the actual person he sees the person we can become. To forgive ourselves. We need to look past our personal shortcomings and see ourselves as God sees us, imperfect human beings with good hearts in need of mercy, compassion and forgiveness. If you want to explore more about our true identity and self worth, listen to episode number 59.

David Sandstrom 45:07

Okay, I know that was a mouthful. So let's summarize. Withholding forgiveness is a severe form of stress. God takes forgiveness very seriously. Forgiveness is a supernatural act and without God's help, we won't be able to do it. We're designed for relationships and forgiveness is a part of healthy relationships. Offering forgiveness to others benefits us tremendously. By withholding forgiveness, we empower our perpetrators to continue to inflict harm on us, even if they're deceased. There's a lot of confusion regarding what forgiveness is, and what it isn't. Every health enthusiast needs to do the forgiveness exercise, and some of us need to forgive ourselves. Okay, I know that was a lot. But keep in mind, the enemy of our souls does not want you to get this information into your hands. You know, sometimes when I do these episodes, the recording goes very smoothly, and it's really not much to it. But this one was not one of those episodes, I really struggled here, I even had to start the recording all over again, I thought it was done. And I had a tech issue. And I had to start from the beginning had to take it from the top all over again. So I've been feeling some oppression myself on this episode, because this is really powerful information that the enemy does not want you to have. And along those lines, if you're enjoying this podcast and you know someone you have a Christian friend that you think might benefit from this information would just share the podcast with them; would you tell them about it? You could do it face to face or use social media if you want. It would really help me to get the word out there and people need this information it's life giving. Also, please remember, in this series on the spiritual component of health, I'm leaning heavily on my book "The Christians Guide to Holistic Health." If you're enjoying this series, I'll bet you enjoy my book, you can pick up a copy today, go to DavidSandstrom.com/book or you can go directly to Amazon. It's called the Christians guide to Holistic Health. And it's available in paperback, Kindle, and Audible. And don't forget to go to the show notes page for this episode DavidSandstrom.com/70 and there you can pick up a copy of the downloadable PDF on the forgiveness exercise. Well, that's it for this week. I enjoyed serving you and I'll talk with you next week. Be blessed