

A GUIDE TO HEALING, FREEDOM,
AND WALKING IN GOD'S GRACE



ROADMAP TO *Forgiveness*

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO RELEASE THE PAST,
RESTORE YOUR HEART, AND
MOVE FORWARD IN FREEDOM



YOU CAN'T
CHANGE WHAT
HAPPENED,
BUT YOU CAN
CHOOSE TO BE
SET FREE.

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ROADMAP TO FORGIVENESS

1. Name Exactly What Happened

Truth Breaks Shame

When God first brought my childhood abuse into the light, my instinct was to soften the language. I wanted to make it smaller—something easier to carry. *Maybe it was not that bad. Maybe I misunderstood. Maybe it does not matter anymore.*

Those thoughts felt safer than facing the truth. But healing did not begin until I stopped minimizing and allowed myself to say plainly what had actually happened:

“I was abused at four years old by someone I trusted.”

Truth dismantles shame because shame thrives in vagueness. When we name what happened, we remove secrecy—and

secrecy is where shame feeds. Naming something is not dishonoring; it is simply being honest.

Ask yourself:

What actually happened?

Do not edit or minimize. Just remember the true version of what happened. Write it. Say it. Bring it into the light.

2. Name What It Cost You

Grief is Part of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not possible without grief. When we begin telling the truth about what happened, we also have to tell the truth about what it cost us. That part can be uncomfortable, because many of us were taught to minimize our pain or move past it quickly.

But grief is not weakness—it is the honest recognition that something valuable was lost. When we name the cost, we are not dwelling in the wound; we are honoring its reality. And that honesty is what makes real forgiveness possible. Many women try to forgive without first allowing themselves to grieve, which is why forgiveness often feels thin or incomplete. We cannot truly release something we have never fully acknowledged that has hurt us.

Ask yourself:

Take a moment to ask yourself what this truly cost you.

When you look back honestly, what was taken from you?

It cost me innocence.

It cost me safety.

*It cost me innocence.
It cost me safety.
It cost me the ability to trust easily.
It shaped how I viewed men.
It shaped how I viewed my own body.
It fused fear into my nervous system.*

Allow yourself to sit with the weight of that.

3. Invite Jesus Into the Memory

Ask Him to Reinterpret What Happened

This is where everything began to change for me. In counseling, I did not just remember the event; I brought Jesus into the memory with me. I asked Him a simple question:

“Where were You?”

What I encountered was not condemnation. It was not distance. It was not silence. What I felt was heartbreak. I felt Him grieving with me. I sensed Him protecting what He could, and gently making something clear to my heart: *This was not My will.*

Inviting Jesus into the memory does not erase what happened, but it does change its meaning.

Trauma whispers lies about who you are. It says, *You are dirty. You are broken. You are unsafe.*

But Jesus speaks a different truth. He says,

“You were harmed. What happened to you was not your fault. And even in that moment, I was there with you—I never left you.”

Ask:

Jesus, what is true about this moment? What do You want me to see that I could not see then?

Then listen.

4. Allow Yourself to Feel What You Buried *Your Emotions Are Truth-Tellers*

When the memory of the abuse finally surfaced, I sobbed for four hours. Not controlled tears. Not quiet, composed tears. The kind that shakes your whole body. The kind that comes from somewhere deep you did not realize was still holding pain.

Looking back now, I understand that moment differently. It was absolutely not weakness. It was my nervous system finally being allowed to release what it had been carrying for decades.

You cannot forgive what you refuse to feel.

So when emotions begin to surface, do not rush to silence them. If anger rises, let it rise. If sadness comes, let it come. If betrayal surfaces, acknowledge it. These emotions are not the enemy. They are signals from places in your heart that were wounded and never given space to speak.

Emotions are information. What we choose to do with them is what determines whether healing can begin.

5. Break the Agreement the Trauma Created

Every Wound Creates Agreements

Every wound creates an agreement. Something we quietly begin to believe about ourselves, about others, or about God in order to make sense of what happened. These agreements often form beneath the surface, but they shape the way we think, the way we react, and the way we move through the world. My wound created several agreements:

I am unsafe.

I have to protect myself.

Men cannot be trusted.

My body is a liability.

Love is too dangerous; performance is better.

Trauma has a way of speaking in the language of identity. It does not just describe what happened; it tries to tell us who we are because of it. For me, forgiveness meant confronting those messages and refusing to let them define me anymore. It required me to say:

“Jesus, I break agreement with the lie that I am unsafe. I break the agreement with the lie that this defines me. I break the agreement with the lie that I am damaged. This is not my identity anymore.”

You are not just forgiving a person; you are severing a contract with a lie.

Ask:

What did I start believing about myself because of this?
Break that agreement out loud.

Example: I began believing that something was wrong with me—that I was damaged and less worthy of love because of what happened.

6. Release Them Into God's Hands

Forgiveness is Surrender, Not Denial

Many people think forgiving means pretending the wound was not real or minimizing the damage that was done. But forgiveness is not denial.

Forgiveness does not mean:

It was okay.

It does not mean it did not matter.

There are no consequences.

You are dishonoring or being disrespectful.

That you are agreeing with what they did.

What forgiveness actually means is this: *I refuse to carry the role of judge.*

When I forgave my friend's father, I was not excusing what he

did. I was not pretending it did not wound me. I was simply placing him back into God's hands. Justice belongs to God. Healing belongs to me.

Forgiveness is the moment you say, "I release you from my need to make this right." *I entrust you to the only One who judges perfectly.*

You are not denying what happened.
You are refusing to let it own you.

7. Speak Life Over the Woman God is Restoring *Blessings Are How God Restores What We Forget*

After forgiveness, there is another part of healing that many people overlook: speaking life over the person God is restoring.

For me, that meant learning to bless myself. To speak truth over the parts of my story that shame had tried to rename. I had to look back at that little girl and say,

"Danielle, you survived. You were so brave. You were not dirty or complicit. You are worthy of protection."

And then I began speaking blessings over the woman I was becoming. *You are whole. You are loved. You are not defined by what happened to you. God has incredible plans for you. You are not broken.*

This is the work of restoration. Shame tries to rename us, attaching our identity to what was done to us. But blessing speaks truth where shame once lived. It calls us back to who we really are.

Blessing restores identity.

Shame renames you.

Blessing reclaims you.

8. Repeat as Needed

Forgiveness is a Journey

For me, forgiveness unfolded in layers. The first time I forgave was deeply emotional and sincere, but it was not the end of the process. As time went on, other memories and triggers surfaced, revealing deeper places that still needed healing. Each new layer invited me to return to forgiveness again. This was not because the first time was not real, but because God was continuing to bring my heart into greater freedom.

Forgiveness is rarely a one-time moment that resolves everything all at once. More often, it becomes a posture of the heart—something we return to when another layer of pain surfaces. Each time we surrender, something loosens.

What Happens Next

Once forgiveness begins, places that have long been sealed open. You start to see your life differently. Patterns that once felt like part of your personality begin to reveal their true purpose.

But when the root begins to heal, the patterns that once felt permanent begin to lose their power.