

## *Foreword*

This is a book about forgiveness being “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10); a book that has its root in the ineffable source of the All-Powerful to forgive, but which points to the inescapable responsibility of our power when we repent. Decades of pastoral ministry have taught me the need for what is contained in these pages.

Fifty years of pastoring—of shepherding souls unto life, healing, God’s wisdom, and heaven’s hope—have involved innumerable conversations with good people seeking counsel. I have personally witnessed thousands who have stepped into the light of understanding the difference between “religious ideas” about God and a “relational revelation” from Him. These have verified God’s grace to forgive and His power to transform any one of us, once our heart becomes touched as our mind is taught by His Spirit. And it is then—when heart and mind understand and receive the dynamic that flows from the cross of Christ, that the Spirit of God begets true repentance—that is, the turning of my mind toward alignment with God’s, and the turning over of my will to yield to His. It is within this decisive encounter of any created being with the Creator of all, that human souls suddenly experience the magnanimity and majesty of forgiveness—of an unchaining from past guilt, folly, and self-centeredness, now replaced by a peace of mind and rest of the soul that only God can give.

Those foundational realities I have just summarized are the essential beginning place for all redemption—all forgiveness, all restoration of relationships, all recovering from brokenness—as the shame caused us either by ourselves or by others who violated us is removed. But from that foundational point, you will find this book crowding you forward—nudging, goading you as it has me, with the inescapable implications of God’s forgiveness lavished upon us. This “crowding forward” is not pushy, but you will

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find it purposeful. The writer is more interested in our well-being than she is in her thesis. You will find yourself caught up in the flow of clear thinking, driven by a purely motivated care and a sensitively-edged passion for a complete embrace of all the implications of God's forgiveness offers to and calls from us.

I have an acquaintance with Leah Coulter that spans over fifteen years. I'm familiar with the fruit of her life and the faithfulness of her and her husband's ministry. She has been sharpened by experience and mellowed by time, and you will sense something of her gentle graciousness as you read; a demeanor that enables our receptivity to what she presents as an unquestionably demanding issue. Matching her graciousness, however, you will find she is also patiently persistent as she points beyond the wonder of God's grace in forgiving us, to the workings of that grace that complete a cycle—so that all heavenside has achieved for us in Christ is not short-circuited by our failure to make the earthside connection through Christ.

One can hardly say enough about how practical and clear these pages are, so I welcome you to a profoundly human book, yet still one that is quite without the limits of mere humanism. You will also find it is a profoundly godly book, but without any of the trappings of pretentious piety. In all, *Rediscovering the Power of Repentance and Forgiveness* is something of a court summons intended to rectify injustices—perhaps ones that have been dealt to you. And since this court convenes in the presence of the universe's Judge, we will not be surprised to find perfect justice and equity, while discovering it is always administrated with loving kindness and gentle mercies. Only God as He is revealed in the Holy Bible is characterized by this incredible balance of unrelenting integrity to apply His law and overflowing fidelity to administer His love.

He wants to work that balance in each of us, not to enforce a law, but to release a grace. And as you read you, as I

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have, may find something deeper in His grace—something that will increase understanding, stir the wellsprings of your soul, and enrich your relationship with others. With that, it might well be that you will find this book personally therapeutic. But whether that is the case or not, I assure you of this—it will certainly increase your capacity to be a healing instrument of God’s love in the midst of a very broken world.

Jack W. Hayford

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