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RADICAL: sweeping, complete

Essential

relentless,

total,

absolute.

Unconditional

profound,

revolutionary,

far-reaching.

FORGIVENESS: to grant relief

Releasing

liberate,

absolve,

provide sanctuary.

Redemptive

pardon,

rescue,

set free.



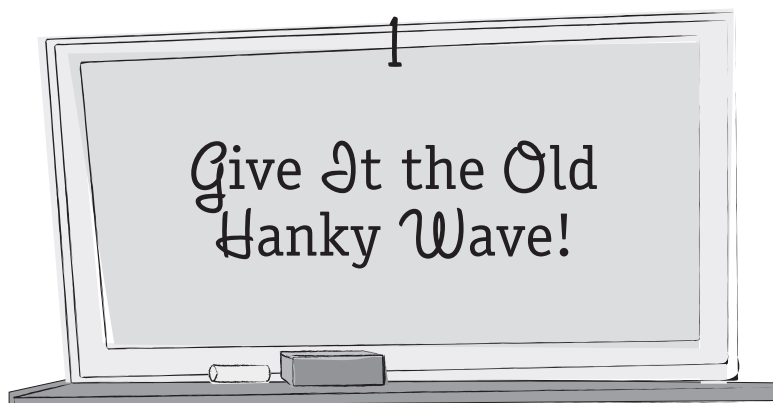
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*To forgive is to put down your 50-pound pack
after a 10-mile climb up a mountain.
To forgive is to fall into a chair after a 15-mile marathon.
To forgive is to set a prisoner free
and discover that the prisoner was you.
To forgive is to reach back into your hurting past
and recreate it in your memory so that you can begin again.
To forgive is to dance to the beat of God's forgiving heart.
It is to ride the crest of love's strongest wave.¹*

Lewis B. Smedes

***This is the journey of radical forgiveness, radical redemption,
radical and purposeful living. . . .***



It's hard to believe another year and writing deadline has passed since we first got acquainted in *Scandalous Grace*.

While we've been apart, I've attempted to make further peace with "The Poodge" (i.e. the lower portion of the abdomen that refuses to lie down, mind its own business, and go away) by purchasing the books and products of Bill Phillips' *Body for Life*, Atkins Diet Plus! Medifast liquid drink, as well as a two-month stint with Weight Watchers. I was doing okay until those pesky holiday seasons arrived (*Easter, Thanksgiving, Groundhog Day, the entire month of December*), and as a result I ended with a final net loss of .2 pounds and nearly \$600 from the old checkbook register.

During the same period of time, I contemplated digesting a dietary supplement endorsed by notorious model-reality television diva, Anna Nicole Smith. I was reading through a *People* magazine while standing in the checkout lane of Target when I came across a two-page photo insert of said diva. Gasping in alarm (*note: Anna was fully clothed*) I was taken aback by her claim of having lost more than 55 pounds with the help of the

nutritional supplement TrimSpa. Immediately I wanted the answer to one question and one question only: Where do I buy TrimSpa?!

Quickly enough I found myself standing in the diet aid aisle of Walgreens and reaching for The Holy Grail of weight loss potential. I could almost feel myself losing weight just holding the jar. Giddy with excitement (*and fantasies of size 4 clothes shopping*), I began to scan the ingredients list. Most of it read like an unknown language with the exception of a bold disclaimer at the bottom of the bottle:

Warning: If you are allergic to shellfish, please consult your physician before taking this product.

Well, it figures I'd find myself on the cusp of weight loss nirvana, only to have it snatched from my chubby grasp! But then I considered buying it anyway. After all, I tried to tell myself, it isn't like I have a *serious* allergy to shellfish. Nah . . . all a little shrimp does to my system is puff it up like a blowfish, constrict my airway, and raise hives the color of purple Kool-Aid everywhere on my body.

Hello?!!

Sometimes my ability to *not* think at age 38 astounds even me.

So here we are again: chick to chick, author to reader, and most importantly, girlfriend to girlfriend. I thought it wise—given the time since we last spoke—to kick off our time with another round of hanky wave truth.

For those new to the ranks allow me to give a brief explanation.

While speaking to women nationally and internationally, I've discovered that many audiences assume speakers somehow live above the fray of real life. Perhaps it has something to do with our standing on a platform, holding a microphone, or being able to get ready that morning in a hotel room with few, if any, distractions. Whatever the case may be, more than one woman has shared with me her preconceived notions of speakers having it all together and managing to do so with seemingly perfect smiles, perfect bodies, perfect families, and perfect stories of success. (It's important to note that women believed such things *prior* to meeting *me*.) Well, I think God has personally put me on this earth to blow that whole image to smithereens. Just ask my husband, my kids, or check out my thighs!

Everyone needs help along the journey of life because nobody has life "all figured out." All of us have our areas in which we thrive, and areas in which we just survive, sometimes only barely. But by walking down the path together, we can figure it out—and have a lot more fun. And that's just what hanky wave truth brings—fun among women by creating a connection between myself, the readers of this book or my audience when I speak, as well as individual participants seated (or reading) near one another.

I've found the most effective and laugh-out-loud enjoyable manner of accomplishing this is through the use of a linen hanky and a few snappy, slightly dysfunctional, and estrogen-laced observations and comments. Observations you can agree or commiserate with—and then, of course, show your female support by wildly waving a hanky back. Of course, one is not

limited to a mere hanky for the wild waving. Feel free to grab a Kleenex, diaper wipe, stretched-out bra, or a crumpled receipt from your last credit card purchase. It really doesn't matter the type of hanky as long as your hand and attitude are attached to it, and you're ready to wave.

So, without further ado—grab a hanky or faux stand-in, assume “the position,”* and prepare to identify as tens of thousands of fabulous chicks before you have!

- * If you believe all forms of cosmetic surgery should be covered by any and all insurance policies under a deductible co-pay of \$10—give me a hanky wave.
- * If you've ever one-handedly removed your bra while driving five miles over the speed limit and never lost your lane—give me a hanky wave.
- * If you've ever bought a pair of painful shoes just because they made your calves look fabulous—give me a hanky wave.
- * If you've ever quoted the Real Woman Bad Food Motto, “I made this food, you will eat this food, and I don't care how bad you think it tastes”—give me a hanky wave.
- * If you understand the medicinal power of chocolate in that it makes you “feel better”—give me a hanky wave.
- * If you've ever watched a beautiful woman walk into a room and said to yourself, *Yep, I hate her*—give me a hanky wave.
- * If you have ever wanted to slam into the back end of the

* Standing, knees slightly bent, hand on one hip, hanky prepared for takeoff in the other! (For a more colorful “attitude” description, refer to page 2 of *Scandalous Grace*.)

car in front of you just because the following sticker was attached to their bumper—"Proud Parent of an A+ Honor Student"—give me a hanky wave.

- * If you'd like to purchase a bumper sticker that reads, "Stressed Parent of a C- (Barely) Student"—give me a hanky wave.
- * If you have discovered that kneecaps, as well as breasts, can droop and go off course—give me a hanky wave.
- * If you ever told someone you forgive them but crossed your fingers behind your back while doing so (and you were over 30 when you did it!)—give me a hanky wave.
- * If you know how to spell *forgiveness* but sometimes don't feel like you have a clue what it *really* means—give me a hanky wave.

Whoa-ha! It seems the more things change, the more they stay the same.

You have once again officially entered the Real Woman Reading Zone. And for the next few hours, days, or weeks (*hey, we women all have multiple interruptions, so no guilt!*) it takes to read this book, I want you to have your own "Girls Night Out."

But you have to do something first. Lose any and all forms of body shapers or bras (*yes, you read me right*). I want you to throw off any and all encumbering straps or confining stretches of spandex. Let your body breathe, woman! Then find your most comfortable spot. Jump back into bed, run some bathwater, or sit in your favorite chair. Whatever the place . . . just get there. And once you're finally settled, read.

Read and laugh.

Read and cry.

Read and sigh.

Read and say aloud, "That is so me!"

In *Radical Forgiveness*, we're going to talk about . . . well, forgiveness. Not "Forgiveness in 5 Easy Steps"—because there is no such thing. Anyone who sells you a "light and easy" forgiveness is really selling something worthless, for it certainly won't last.

Instead we're going to talk about what it *really* means to forgive those who have hurt you, to forgive yourself for the dumb things you've done, and to forgive God for what he has—or hasn't—done in your life.

Along the way I'll reveal some of the areas I struggle with—not so you can see how bad or good of a person I am, but because we are fellow travelers on the road.

What does true forgiveness have to do with your "here and now"? And why is it so important? Even more, is getting over the forgiveness hump really worth all the work (*groan*)?

Radical, cleansing forgiveness means walking away from sin, shame, fear, and disappointment. It means facing each day with a lighter burden, a lighter heart, and a new purpose to look ahead. (*Turn back to the beginning of this chapter and reread the quote by Lewis B. Smedes. Wouldn't you like to feel that way every day?*)

God is calling you to a life of freedom—to a life that's radically redeemed by his truth. A life that isn't perfect, because no life is perfect on this earth. But a life in which you can be released of everything that weighs you down and live daily in the light of a forgiveness that is so total, so profound, so sweep-

ing, and so satisfying that you will be radically changed! Right here and right now you can have a new zest for life, a new hope for the future, and a new and radical freedom!

*Radically His,
Julie Ann Barnhill*



Forgiveness Observed

These quotes have acted as stepping-stones on my own journey toward understanding God's radical forgiveness. Perhaps they'll do the same for you.

A true Christian is a sign of contradiction—a living symbol of the Cross. He or she is a person who believes the unbelievable, bears the unbearable, forgives the unforgivable, loves the unlovable, is perfectly happy not to be perfect, is willing to give up his or her will, becomes weak to be strong . . . and finds love by giving it away.

JOSEPH ROY, *Leadership*, Vol. 5, no. 4.

And he did it, rescued us from certain doom. And he'll do it again, rescuing us as many times as we need rescuing.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:10, *The Message*, 2095.

Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future.

LEWIS B. SMEDES, quoted on <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/149/55.0.html>. The quote is from "Forgiveness—The Power to Change the Past," an article that originally appeared in the January 7, 1983, issue of *Christianity Today*.

If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find in each person's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

Whoever approaches Me walking, I will come to him running; and he who meets Me with sins equivalent to the whole world, I will greet him with forgiveness equal to it. **E. W. HOWE**

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.

EPHESIANS 1:7 (NASB)

We all agree that forgiveness is a beautiful idea until we have to practice it.

C. S. LEWIS, quoted in *Draper's Book of Quotations for the Christian World*, edited by Edythe Draper (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992), Entry 4104.

Forgiveness is the scent that the rose leaves on the heel that crushes it. **MARK TWAIN**

At some point you pardon the people in your family for being stuck together in all their weirdness, and when you can do that, you can learn to pardon everyone. **ANNE LAMOTT**, *Traveling Mercies*

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourself be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

GALATIANS 5:1 (NIV)

Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have someone to forgive. . . . I am telling you what Christianity is. I did not invent it. And there, right in the middle of it, I find "Forgive us our sins as



Endnotes

¹ (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/149/55.0.html>) This quote is from an article that originally appeared in the January 7, 1983 issue of *Christianity Today*.

CHAPTER TWO: A Mess of Magnificent Proportions

- ¹ James 5:16, Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 2208.
- ² Ephesians 1:7, *ibid.*, 2126.
- ³ Romans 5:8, *ibid.*, 2039.
- ⁴ Isaiah 43:25, *ibid.*, 1292.
- ⁵ Colossians 3:13, *ibid.*, 2148.
- ⁶ ¹ John 3:5-6, *ibid.*, 2226.
- ⁷ Romans 5:1, *ibid.*, 2039.
- ⁸ Romans 7:24-25, *ibid.*, 2044.

CHAPTER THREE: I've Never Told This to Anyone . . .

- ¹ Proverbs 28:13, *The Message*, 1153.
- ² Numbers 32:23, *ibid.*, 287.
- ³ Romans 8:29, *ibid.*, 2046.
- ⁴ Hebrews 12:1, *ibid.*, 2196.
- ⁵ John 14:6, *ibid.*, 1950.
- ⁶ John 8:44, *New American Standard Bible* (LaHabra, Calif.: The Lockman Foundation, 1977).
- ⁷ Job 1:6, *The Message*, 843.

What Real Women Say about Julie Ann Barnhill, her books, and her workshops . . .

There wasn't a page in this book that didn't have "ME" written all over it.

Thank you for writing such a hilarious, yet frank book about the wonder of God's AMAZING grace. You've exposed your life and experiences so that others may see how scandalous God's grace is! I can't wait to read *Radical Forgiveness*—I really need it!

I am a "new" Christian. I've often felt overwhelmed with the daunting task of *becoming* a Christian mom, wife, friend, employee. . . . Your simple and laugh-out-loud instruction has given me hope.

Even though I was raised in the church, I've made some very bad choices. It's a good thing God's grace is in never-ending supply, 'cuz I sure have used quite a bit of it! Thank you for showing me how to give those things to the cross and allow scandalous grace to take care of the rest!

For the first time in 53 years I'm admitting my scorched places. I had them all along and just didn't recognize them . . . or how they were affecting my life and relationships. Thanks a bunch—from the bottom of my heart!

You have a special way about you. . . . Your humor and energy grabbed my attention.

Thank you for your words, your light, your salt, your life, and your passion.

Three years ago, when I was 37, I found out my dad was not my biological father. My mom was raped by someone she knew. When you talked about the boy and the *A* on his forehead, and how he is the reminder of sin, that is how I have felt—only I have an *R* for product of Rape . . . and a reminder of a painful time for my mother. I know that God turns ugly situations into beautiful blessings, but some days I require more grace than others. I will continue to pray about it, but in the meantime your message reinforced to me that God is the only Father I truly need.

I can relate to everything you said. I am 41 years old and have just recently let go of comparing myself with others.

I have been in therapy for 13 years because of my scorched places. I came to hear you with a broken heart, but left with hope.

Thank you for being candid. I'm 23 and getting married in September. I don't even like to read, but God put this book in my hand for a reason—because I needed to learn how to accept myself. I'll probably be the same weight and have the same acne as I do now for the rest of my life, but now I realize that's not even important.

I've always been insecure, and lately I've gained a lot of weight. This makes me feel even worse about myself. Thank you for showing me how to stop comparing myself to others.

I have never felt like I was what God wanted—like I was a very good Christian. When you said God accepts us even with our mistakes and faults, a warm feeling of peace came over me. I wanted to run up and give you a great big hug!

Until *Scandalous Grace*, I really never believed that other women thought the things that I did. I thought I was the only one who weighed herself every day.

I am a single mother of 2 wonderful girls, ages 11 and 7. And yet it is like you have lived my life in parts . . . as if I were writing the book myself! It is so wonderful to know that I am “normal.”

You are hilarious, yet you touch the secret places of my mind and my heart. You have made my entire life better!

You've given me permission to accept myself, while not making excuses for attitudes and behavior that are destructive.

I've been a “mess” more times than I care to remember. Sometimes that makes it hard to believe God still loves me. But instead of rolling my eyes at another “God loves you” book, you had me hooked from the first page!

I can't tell you how liberating it is to find out that there are so many other women out there just like me. Only the addresses

change! More liberating still is to know that God's grace and his radical forgiveness is sufficient.

I've read lots of self-help books, but none of them impacted my life like your workshop.

You have *got* to get your own talk show! I have never laughed so hard in my life! Thank you for a wonderful, wonderful time!

Talk about a timely, appropriate message for me and my friends. You just keep on doin' what you're doin', girlfriend!