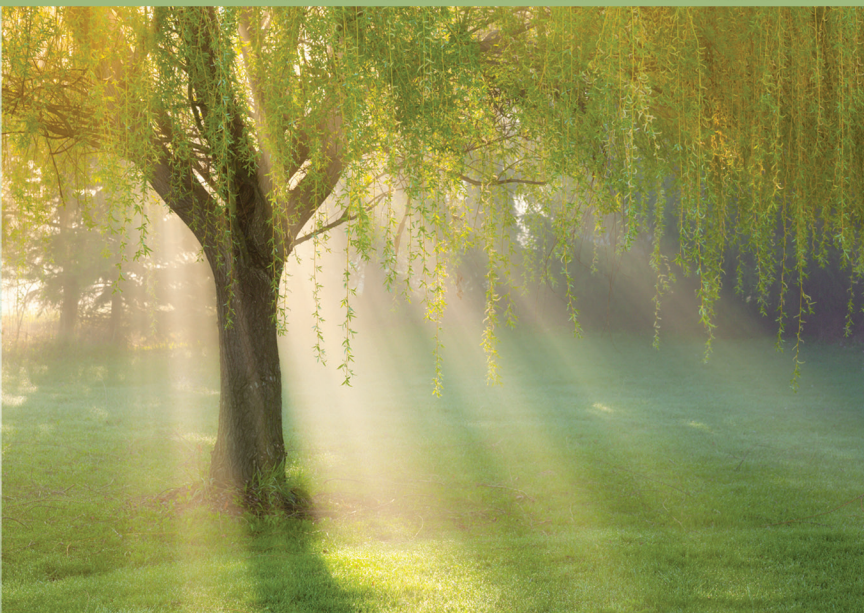


ABANDONMENT

# Abandonment to Forgiveness

THE FREEDOM SERIES  
CREATED BY MICHELLE BORQUEZ



Michelle Moore with Paige Henderson

# Abandonment to **Forgiveness**

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The Freedom Series  
Created by Michelle Borquez



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# Abandonment to Forgiveness

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A decorative graphic consisting of several light green, swirling lines that form a circular, floral-like pattern. The word "Contents" is centered within this swirl in a matching light green color.

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## The Authors

**Michelle Moore** was abandoned by her parents as a young teen. She carried that bitterness like an abscess for many years. When she finally faced the pain and turned to the God who will never leave, she began a journey toward mercy, forgiveness, and healing.

**Paige Henderson** is sought after nationally and internationally as a speaker who loves unlocking the passion in the hearts of women. Paige and her husband, Richard, founded Fellowship of the Sword Ministries [[www.fellowshipofthesword.com](http://www.fellowshipofthesword.com)].

**Sharon Kay Ball** is a licensed professional counselor and a mother to three children. In addition to her private practice, Sharon is a staff counselor at her church. Her own personal experience with suffering, the daily grind of single parenting, and counseling her clients has given Sharon tremendous compassion and insight for those dealing with life's tragedies and trials.



Chapter 1

## Michelle's Story

By Michelle Moore

“And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.”

—Luke 11:4 (NKJV)

When I was fourteen, my mother changed her identity and then left me. For nearly eighteen years I didn't know if she was dead or alive. This abandonment was the most painful thing that ever happened to me, and it left its mark for many years. Immediately after my mom left, I became a shell of the girl I had been before. Wracked by pain, fear, and emptiness, I did not

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recognize my life at all. My mother and I had been so close. She and my dad were divorced, and Mom was my best friend. Then she left me. I couldn't call her. I couldn't write. I had no idea where she had gone or why.

I would lie in bed and say to myself, *Just how awful am I? Even the mothers of murderers and rapists visit their children in prison. My mother left me.*

**My self-esteem  
plummeted**

*Just up and left. How awful must I really be?*

I would ponder over and over what I had done that could have been so bad, and I blamed myself for her decision. My self-esteem plummeted and all sorts of insecurities reared their ugly heads with a vengeance. My father wasn't much help either. After my mother left, my grandfather asked me to wait one month before I contacted my father. By the time that month had passed, I had already been sent to live with an aunt and uncle in another city. It

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was clear to me very quickly that their home was not a place I wished to remain. However, when I asked my father if I could live with him, he responded with talk of his having “a new family now” (referring to my stepmother and their three-month-old baby). He asked if I could just stay where I was. My own parents didn't want me. My aunt and uncle thought of me as a burden. How could anyone else want me?

Abandonment is ugly. I couldn't put that event in the back of my mind and act like it didn't matter. I could not pretend that it had never happened. After all, there were so many constant reminders of what I was missing—Mother's Day, family holidays. My friends had mothers. Moms were everywhere, except for mine.

The people around me could not understand or relate to the deep pain I carried. On the outside, I looked perfectly fine. On the inside, I was crying out for help. My feeling that no one



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understood what I was going through left me isolated and alone. I could be in a room filled with people and feel like I was the loneliest person in the world.

During the eighteen years that my mother was gone, I struggled to make sense of her absence. Eventually, I began to build my own life without her. I grew

up, but every achievement, **I wished my mother was there with me.**

every milestone

in my life, carried a dark cloud because my mother wasn't there to witness it. My high school graduation, my wedding, even the births of my children were tainted by the absence that had become more like an abscess in my heart. When my youngest son Carson was born, I cried—not tears of joy for his arrival, but of despair because I wished my mother was there with me. Because she had simply disappeared from my life, I had no closure. The “not knowing” brought on fear, worry,

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and grief that words cannot fully describe. The void in my life and hole in my heart remained a festering wound.

I spent many years searching for the love, value, and hope I did not get from my mother and father. I tried to find value and worth at home, but they were not there. I thought I could find them in business. However, regardless of the successes, accolades, money, and material possessions I earned, I still couldn't find or replace what had been missing in my earlier years.

One night, like so many others, I found myself crying inconsolably to my husband about the injustices and hurts from my childhood and the pain of my parents' abandonment. Meanwhile our own children played in the next room. When I realized what I was doing, I felt convicted. I was ashamed. I was crying about the past while my loving husband, our adorable children, and I were safe and healthy in our

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beautiful home. I couldn't help but wonder how many mothers pray for healthy children every day, or pray for loving husbands, or wish they had a safe place to live. Here I was, letting life pass me by, not enjoying the blessings that the Lord had given me. Still, I hurt. I cried. I couldn't get past my past.

That night, as I cried, everything came to a head. I finally realized that the reason my pain wouldn't heal was because I had not forgiven my parents. I was still carrying the weight because I had not let go. Finally, I was forced to face my past. I had to confront the pain in order for healing to happen.

That was the first step in my healing. I began to understand that God was with me at all times, and that he was not going to leave me like my parents had. They may have abandoned me, but God never had. He was different. Upon realizing this fact, things began to change. For so long I had felt like I was a puzzle with pieces missing. But now, slowly, I was finding

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those pieces and putting each into their place. As my relationship grew with the Lord, my parents' shortcomings didn't matter so much. It wasn't the end of the world, as it had always felt like to me.

As I journeyed down the path, I slowly began to feel mercy, grace, and forgiveness in a way I never had before. I began to consider human nature, and I realized that sometimes when people make poor decisions they don't always know how deeply they wound others. My mother might have told herself that even at a young age, I was better off without her being in my life. My father might have believed that it was best to keep his distance from everyone involved—including me—in order to avoid confrontations with other family members. Truth be told, I may never know their reasons. But I wouldn't be the person I am today if it weren't for the choices—good and bad—that my parents made.

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I share all of this because I want to encourage anyone holding forgiveness hostage to let it go. Avoid making the same mistakes I did. If we don't forgive others, it is impossible for us to heal. Although it is rewarding, forgiveness is a journey. It is one of the hardest things I have ever had to do in my life. It's not just something I said only once and it was done; I had to commit to it and recommit to it often.

I knew that, as a Christian, I must forgive. It is not a choice; it is a command. I had withheld forgiveness because I was waiting until my parents, who had wronged me, asked for forgiveness. This withholding helped me feel in control of the situation. But the Bible doesn't say we get to forgive when we have decided that a person has suffered enough—according to us—to atone for their actions. It says we must forgive. No ifs, ands, or buts.

It took time for me to realize that forgiveness doesn't mean the person has permission to hurt

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me again, nor does it mean that I will forget. It doesn't even mean that they will be so moved by my graciousness that they will change their behavior. I had to realize that, more than likely, the person who has offended and deeply hurt me has no idea how hurt I am. After all, they are not the one walking in my shoes. They may not even realize they hurt me in the first place.

It was like a switch had flipped. After so many years, I experienced a revelation. I realized that while I was wallowing in my pain, my mother and father had gone on with their lives, likely unaware of the damage they caused.

Forgiveness doesn't mean that everything will be fixed and relationships will be miraculously restored. But it does mean that we choose not to seek revenge or reciprocity. And by the way, if we put conditions or expectations on our forgiveness of others, we set ourselves up to be hurt again and again.

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Forgiveness is a choice only you can make. Not just once, but over and over. To the man asking how many times he should forgive, Jesus said, “I do not say to you, up to seven times but, up to seventy times seven” (Matthew

Forgiveness is  
a choice only  
you can make.

18:22 NKJV). The depth of forgiveness Jesus taught is not about the size of numbers; it’s about the size of your heart. Forgiveness is not always easy, but the rewards are limitless.

I had endured years upon years of anger, grief, horror, tears, fear, and suicidal depression. I had been dragging around a bag filled with pain and bad memories since the nightmare started. But I could not change what happened. The “what ifs” and “if onlys” were neither productive nor healthy. Instead, I had to make a conscious decision to take what happened and use it for good. God has moved in my life and I decided to share it with others. Amazingly,

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when I stopped focusing on myself and instead focused my time and energy on helping other people, my own healing began to grow by leaps and bounds.

My head had been swimming with angry questions for God: *Why did this happen to me? Why did the other person get to move on? What am I supposed to do with all this hurt?* Life is full of difficult questions like these that we can't possibly answer because we don't see all that God sees. But I decided to trust God. Now, he is already using the years of suffering to strengthen me and to glorify him, and he will continue to do so. I just had to take the first step.

Now imagine what happened when I discovered, after an eighteen-year absence, that my mother was alive and well in a distant state. One morning, I heard a voice on the phone that I didn't recognize announce herself as my mother. After some questioning to determine



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the authenticity of the call, my heart dared to hope that all would be well and I would get the answers I had needed for so long. After a face-to-face meeting and some interaction with my mom, I came to realize that my dreams of a sweet reunion, with everything lining up to fill the hole in my heart, were not to be a reality.

The true reason for her sudden return became apparent almost immediately. She was in great financial need and was looking for money. Yes, she was alive and that was great news. But she was oblivious of what she had done to me and how it wreaked havoc on my life. That oblivion, coupled with her not caring about the years she lost with me or about the news of being a grandmother, was the beginning of a painful realization that my mother had not missed me. She chose to be away all those years and had only returned when she thought it would benefit her financially. However, here is where the true blessing lies: I was deeply hurt—*but I had a choice*. I could stay hurt and be bitter

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or I could look healing in the face. Either way, I knew the work would have to start with me.

I found myself standing at the proverbial fork in the road. Which path did I want to go down? I could see that choosing the path of anger and pain would only lead me to living in the past. But by choosing to stand on God's promises, I could see it leading to true healing and happiness. So I chose to ask God for his help in finding closure. I asked God to lead the way to help me move on. He answered, and for that, I am grateful.

One of the best things I did was to commit to not making the same choices that had harmed me. My parents weren't around for me physically and emotionally. However, I chose to be the best mother I could possibly be. And I chose wisely when I married my husband. I saw his heart for children and knew I would be providing a great father for my future children. My husband says all the time how grateful he

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is that my childhood was the way it was. He says that he knows I am the great mother I am because of what I didn't have as a child.

Obedience to God begins with humility. We must believe that his way is better than our own. We may not always understand his ways of working, but by humbly obeying, we will receive his blessings. We must remember that God can use anything to accomplish his purposes. When you can remember what happened and direct those emotions toward doing something significant and positive today, you can declare yourself an overcomer.

This past Christmas Day, I was joyful. There was no anxiety about the upcoming holiday, with disappointing thoughts of another Christmas without my parents. During the build up to Christmas Day, no longer did I think, *Only a few more days until the day I will be crushed yet again*. This year there were no tears or feelings of sadness and emptiness. There was no longing for my parents and the childhood

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that had been stolen from me. Instead, I spent the day enjoying family and good food while thanking God that we were all together, happy, and healthy. Our home was filled with love, laughter, and joy. It wasn't until that evening, while cuddled up on the sofa with my boys, that I realized how happy I was, and just how happy I'd been all day.

You see, this year was different. This was the year that I chose to walk down the path marked *forgiveness* and learned how sweet it is with Jesus holding the lantern to light the way.

Bank accounts will go up and down. Jobs will come and go. People will disappoint you over and over again. But if you are able to forgive and have hope that today, tomorrow, and every day thereafter your best days are still to come, you have everything you need. *You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you* (Philippians 4:13 NKJV); and that includes forgiveness.