

Shawn Lantz

Author and speaker Shawn Lantz is the first to admit that her popular bible studies for women were birthed from her own, sometimes, disorderly journey of faith. Both studies in the “Living with Unmet Desires” series-- Exposing the Many Faces of Jealousy and the most recent study, Encountering the Healing Power of Forgiveness – stem from Shawn’s own struggles with the same issues.



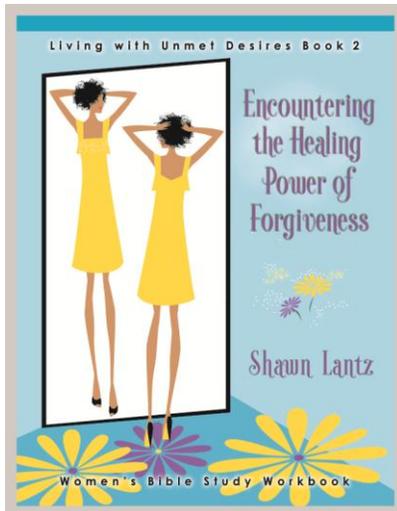
“Creating these studies has been a natural and unfolding process of personal discovery,” says Shawn, “because once the core issues of a jealous heart are uncovered, forgiveness has to follow. It was almost as if God opened my wound and let me see the reason for the infection. It made me realize that further healing would come only through forgiving, so the writing became a restorative process for me.”

Raised as a missionary kid in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Shawn saw the poorest of the poor enjoy the kind of faith that made them spiritually rich. Shawn came to regard the people from Congo as her brothers and sisters and she was deeply moved and personally changed by the way they depended on God and led purposeful, fulfilling lives, despite their circumstances. Through these experiences, it became Shawn’s life mission to possess the same kind of unwavering belief and share it with others. Shawn wrote her first book, Congo Vignettes, in 2008, which invites readers into the lives of her grandparents, her parents and her siblings, showing a glimpse into three generations of her family’s missionary work in Congo.

Feeling a true call to the ministry of discipleship, mentoring and teaching, Shawn became more and more compelled to share what she had learned through her life about faith and true dependence on the Lord. She began Esengo Ministries (Esengo means “joy” in Lingala, the national language of Congo) to fulfill her passion and encourage women to develop a love for the Scriptures. She has spent much of her adult life writing, teaching and speaking about her relationship with Jesus Christ to women’s groups throughout the country.

Through her second book, Living With Unmet Desires: Exposing the Many Faces of Jealousy, Shawn uses the story of King Saul to explore the nature of jealousy. The study was necessitated by Shawn’s personal struggle with the deterioration in her relationship with her own sister-in-law. This inescapable relationship needed restoration and Shawn sought answers for herself in God’s Word.

“My sister-in-law, Karen, and I had a great relationship for many years,” says Shawn. “But then we began to live almost every woman’s story. One of us got a house first; one of us got pregnant first; it became a relationship based on one-ups and it began to unravel our friendship. It took a crisis in our lives that led her to ask me for prayer. And to be quite honest, I was angry with her and didn’t want to pray for her. But I relented and we began to call each other for prayer on a weekly basis. Through that prayer time and the insight I had received in the study of God’s Word, our relationship was restored to the point that we are today – not just sisters by marriage, but sisters by choice.”



Her most recent bible study, *Living with Unmet Desires: Encountering the Healing Power of Forgiveness*, follows the same formula. Using the story of Joseph as the biblical basis, Shawn also weaves personal experiences with unforgiveness into the pages.

“As with many women, I had some very hurtful things happen in my adolescence and I stayed angry for many years. But the more I walked with God, the more I understood I had to forgive the people who had hurt me. It was like God was saying, ‘Shawn, you’re the prisoner until you start to forgive. If you want joy and peace, I cannot give it to you until you start releasing the pain and anger.’ I realized that forgiveness is not a one-time event. I had to forgive them every day, ignoring the fact that I didn’t feel as if I was letting it

go. I understood that God was asking for my obedience to walk in forgiveness which really had nothing to do with my feelings. Then one day, I woke up and realized it didn’t hurt anymore and that I was actually hoping those people who I had been angry with for so long were living happy lives. I based the bible study on the story of Joseph because every person in the world can find themselves in that story—either as Joseph or his brothers or his father. I hope this study will help others to realize that if they want to go deeper with God, forgiving others is essential.”

Both entries in the *Living With Unmet Desires* series include personal, daily assignments designed to help readers make Godly choices on their way to living victoriously, even with unmet desires. The series has been used by women’s groups in churches of all denominations from California to Virginia and all points in between. Currently, Shawn lives in Nashville, Tennessee with her husband and three children. Shawn shares the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ through serving on the women’s team at her church, teaching Sunday school, leading women’s Bible studies and speaking at women’s events around the world. But her ultimate desire is to challenge people to find the kind of practical, life-altering wisdom that can only come from the Scriptures.

“When I was growing up in the Congo, we had a very limited supply of books for me to read,” Shawn recalls. “Without the distraction of television or an iPod, I would spend hours and hours reading in my lavender-colored room on my double bed in front of my open-shuttered window in hopes of catching part of a delicious breeze to cool me off. I read the same books up to fifty times. Some characters in the story would feel like real-life friends. I would laugh and cry with them, secretly wishing that they were part of my world. I didn’t used to think so, but the Bible is truly a masterpiece of literary works. Drama, adventure, betrayal, redemption, hatred, and love are all lived out in the lives of ordinary human beings directed by an extraordinary God. It is my heart’s desire that people will fall in love with the Word of God and realize how impacting it can be in their everyday lives.”

Q&A with Shawn Lantz
Author of **Encountering the Healing Power of Forgiveness**



1) With so many terrible things that happen in life, i.e. the Aurora shooting, how is it possible for victims of such tragedies to forgive and why should they?

Forgiving others may be one of the most difficult commands we are given to obey by Jesus Christ. With the horrors we see daily in the media, such as the recent shooting in Aurora, CO, the surviving victims are faced with painful decisions regarding forgiveness. Those who either will not or cannot claim the redemptive power of Jesus Christ to enable them to forgive the unthinkable are doomed to a life of despair, anger, and bitterness, which will ultimately destroy their joy, life purpose, and, most tragically, those they love. They will become prisoners to their offender and to their own destructive rage and desire for revenge, causing them to become victims once again. Those who decide to make the costly choice to obey Jesus Christ's command to forgive, face the painful truth that they must die to their own sense of justice and allow God to deal with those who have hurt them in His own way and in His own timing. Obedience to Jesus Christ, by forgiving their perpetrator, will allow them to walk free from the depression and an insatiable desire for revenge. They will be given the authority to minister to others out of their deepest pain, proving that our God is the Redeemer of all that touches our lives.

2) What are some specific grievances that most people have a difficult time forgiving?

Specific grievances that most people have a difficult time forgiving would include those life experiences in which some sense of deep betrayal has occurred such as: sexual abuse, adultery, extortion, acts of great deceit/hypocrisy, an unprovoked/unjust wounding, acts of jealousy or rage and murder, issues of abandonment by a parent, and long-standing family discord.

3) What do we gain by forgiving people who hurt us?

When we forgive people who hurt us, we gain the following invaluable spiritual insights which will serve us for a lifetime:

- * Granting forgiveness to others shows us our own need for mercy.
- * Forgiving others allows us to share in the privilege of suffering with Christ.
- * Forgiving others allows us to quiet the accusations from the enemy of our souls that we are not forgiven by Jesus Christ of our sins.
- * Forgiving others has the power to change our family legacy for generations.

I love mercy, when mercy is given to me! Being obedient to Christ by showing mercy to someone I do not believe deserves mercy is one of the greatest methods God uses to conform me into the image of His Son who died because of His mercy that I do not deserve in view of my own sin.

In Philippians 1:29, the apostle Paul shares this profound insight: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him." Forgiveness is a process that grants us the privilege of sharing in Christ's sufferings. Scripture tells me that a benefit of suffering is that I do not live the rest of my earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God (1 Peter 4:2). Forgiveness allows me to live within the will of God and receive His favor and blessing on my life because of my obedience to Him. Satan stands ever ready to

accuse us of our sin - both confessed and unconfessed sin. When we forgive others, we take away Satan's power to convince us that we stand condemned before God ourselves. We can rebuke him and his lies with the blood of Jesus Christ and find peace and healing (1 John 3:18-21).

Perhaps the most profound benefit of forgiveness is its power to change our family legacy for generations. We may have come from a family line full of sins that have caused us great suffering. This generational sin threatens to infect our children and grandchildren. Forgiveness is a key component to breaking the chains of generational sin and beginning a godly heritage for generations that follow (Psalm 103:17-18).

4) What does forgiveness look like? Do we still remember grievances after we forgive?

Forgiveness is a complex issue and thus its appearance is complex as well. Many mistakenly believe that forgiveness and reconciliation are synonymous. Forgiveness requires just one person's obedience; reconciliation takes two willing parties who desire healing and restoration in their relationship. Forgiveness is something that we can be empowered to give to another by the Holy Spirit, regardless of the actions of the one who hurt us.

Some falsely believe that the forgiveness process is not occurring because the name of the offender or the remembrance of the grievance brings pain. In my study of Scripture and forgiveness, I have found that there are many parallels between processing grief's stages (denial, anger, depression, and acceptance) and the process of forgiveness. Often those that begin the journey of forgiveness become frustrated or give up because they are in denial, are angry or depressed and they feel that they are not making progress. We must push beyond these natural feelings so that we can move toward acceptance.

Some rely too much on our feelings regarding forgiveness. We grieve over what has been lost in our relationships, but believing that forgiveness is merely an emotion absent of painful remembrance is not an indication that healing has not begun if a person commits to seeing his or her healing through to the end.

Forgiveness is the deliberate relinquishment of one's right for vengeance. No human being is capable of completely forgetting what has happened to hurt him or her. A benchmark of healing is achieved when the wounded party is desirous more of peace than revenge. This can only happen if we commit ourselves to asking Jesus Christ to change our heart to bless those who have hurt us deeply instead of cursing them, which is our natural bent.

A person who is walking the path of forgiveness is one who continually takes the pain of remembrance captive and makes it bow in obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). We must trust that God will reward us for our costly obedience and submission to His perfect justice in our situation.

5) If there is one stumbling block to forgiveness that you see most often what would it be?

The one stumbling block to forgiveness that I see most often is the false belief that if one forgives the offender, the wrong that was done is condoned. Never in Scripture does God condone our sin, but He will be faithful and just to forgive us of those sins we confess to Him and then to cleanse us from sin's unrighteous stain (1 John 1:9).

Withholding forgiveness has the power to destroy us if we comfort ourselves with our bitterness toward our offender and refuse the healing God offers in His Word. Therefore, forgiveness does not condone what has been done against us, rather it opens the door for God to take control of the damaged relationship. Forgiving does not mean we are unwise in our vulnerability with someone who is not taking responsibility for his or her wrongdoing. The forgiveness we give to someone who has deeply wounded us may require healthy boundaries to be set in place so that the offender does not have access to wound us repeatedly. Forgiveness sets us free to be obedient to Christ's command to forgive others so that we can participate fully in the abundant life He came to give us (John 10:10).