

# PRAYING with *Fire*

## PRAYER POINTS



### **The FedEx Guide to Self-Forgiveness**

**When you absolutely, positively have to forgive yourself overnight.**

by Danny Verbov

Okay, you did it again.

You promised yourself you wouldn't have another piece of chocolate cake...

You convinced yourself it was okay to hide some papers from the tax man...

Or you just had a peep at some dubious website...

And the sheer awfulness guts you with guilt and sinks you with shame.

But it's not just that.

Your family and friends would never forgive you if they knew half of what you do.

Every time you slip up...

Every time it's just you alone with your little dark secret...

You feel like a real loser, a jerk. You've failed again.

Are you ever going to change?

Can you ever forgive yourself?

Yes, according to psychologist Dr. Fred Luskin, director of the Stanford University Forgiveness Project, and author of *Forgive for Good*.

## **The biggest obstacle to self-forgiveness may be our tendency to wallow in our own guilt.**

Luskin discovered that the biggest obstacle to self-forgiveness may be our tendency to wallow in our own guilt. "It's not just that we feel bad because we know we've done wrong," he explains. Everybody does that. But some of us actually draw those bad feelings around ourselves like a blanket, cover our heads and refuse to stop the wailing.

Instead of taking responsibility for what we've done by trying to repair the damage or search for help, many of us unconsciously decide to punish ourselves by feeling miserable for the rest of our lives.

Which gives us the tacit approval to continue to slip up... and so the cycle continues.

### **The Forgiveness Prayer**

So, what can you do about it?

Jewish tradition addresses this with a prayer to say every night, just before falling asleep: I hereby forgive anyone who annoyed me or mocked me, or who sinned against me whether physically, financially, or hurt my honor or anything else of mine. Whether accidentally, willingly, unintentionally or intentionally; whether in speech or in action, in this life or any other. And no person should be punished because of what they did to me.

It's a wonderful prayer – therapeutic, cleansing, purifying. Finishing the day like that puts things into perspective.

You don't have to take yourself so seriously. You don't have to stew over slights or affronts to your status or ego. It clears your mind and soul, so you can sleep calmly – and rise refreshed.

As Rabbi Zelig Pliskin writes: "When we forgive others, we help ourselves as much as we help those whom we forgive. We are elevating ourselves and will feel much better when we forgive, than if we would keep on adding more and more resentment."

I'm not talking only about making amends with others. I'm also talking about the ways we harm ourselves, with no one else directly involved. How can you forgive *yourself* for those recurring mistakes, those serial "sins" you've been guilty of for years?

You eat yourself up for days, brooding, putting yourself down, despairing of ever climbing out of the pit you've dug for yourself.

All that self-chastisement inhibits your life, makes you depressed and restricts any growth or personal development. Not to mention how it affects your health or how you react to those around you.

But let's be honest. You're probably not the Wicked Witch of the West, Darth Vader or The Joker. You're a soul created in the image of God. And you are allowed to forgive yourself.

Herein lies the power of that nightly prayer. Let's read it again, but a little differently this time: I hereby forgive myself for getting annoyed or mocking myself for something I did today, or for sinning against myself whether abusing my body, finances or damaging my honor or anything else. Whether accidentally, willingly, unintentionally, or intentionally; whether in speech or in action, in this life or any other. And I should not be punished because of what I did to myself or anyone else.

Of course, you must express genuine remorse and come up with serious intentions and a self-control plan to do better. And of course, you must apologize to anyone you've offended or hurt.

Here's the second part of the prayer:

May it be Your Will, my God, and the God of my ancestors, that I should not err again and should not repeat my mistakes, and that I shouldn't anger You any more or do bad in Your eyes. In Your great mercy may You erase the mistakes I have made, but not through suffering or terrible disease. May the words of my mouth and the feelings of my heart be acceptable to You, my Rock and Redeemer.

But adopting this prayer as a daily habit will go a long way to calming you down and helping you forgive yourself.

So why not start saying it - and thinking about it - tonight?

Place your soul in the FedEx envelope and send it to God.

***He'll look after it for you overnight and return it first thing in the morning – pure, clean, refreshed, and full of new opportunity.***