

The Art of Forgiveness: An Expression of Peace

Pamela D. Marshall

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Full of wise counsel, The Art of Forgiveness is a faith-based self-help text about the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of letting go of the past.

With elements of a memoir, Pamela Marshall's emotive faith-based self-help text *The Art of Forgiveness* asserts that forgiving others—and oneself—leads to liberation, healing, and peace.

Marshall, the daughter of a Pentecostal preacher who had thirteen children, learned what life was like for Black women by observing her mother. Early on, she received the suggestion that personal happiness was not a primary goal. She witnessed teenage marriages that led to early pregnancies and many babies. With daily lives marked by household chores, working in fields, and cleaning houses for white people, it seemed that the women around Marshall had no voice. Marshall herself survived rape, an abortion, failed marriages, and two stillbirths. Still, she writes, she faced and rose above her challenges to become a mindfulness coach and a yoga instructor. The spiritual practices, meditations, and yoga exercises that helped her factor into the book's suggestions.

The book is full of wise counsel. When it comes to its recommendations to others, its tone is variously one of exhortation, storytelling, revelation, sorrow, and exultation. It presents forgiveness as an "art form" that demands the same dedication, perseverance, and wholehearted devotion that artists bring to their work. Declaring forgiveness to be the key to peace, freedom, and the creation of a life that reflects the beauty and glory of God, the book includes intimate examples of forgiveness bringing personal and interpersonal healing and enabling people to embody the likeness of God. It suggests practices toward the achievement of forgiveness that draw on Marshall's varied background: there are biblical verses and encouragements to read the Bible; there are suggestions related to Zen doodling, journaling, writing poetry, and drawing, all designed to release negative thought patterns and create space for forgiveness, peace, and healing. There are yoga poses as well, explained in a step-by-step manner. This holistic approach takes into consideration that some people will be more attracted to meditative activities while others may be drawn to practices and exercises that are more visual or physical. However, the text makes excessive and distracting use of capitalization and bold print, while the lack of space between its section headings and the text proper results in tight, cramped pages.

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KRISTINE MORRIS (November 2, 2022)

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