



As We Forgive: Stories of Reconciliation from Rwanda

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Inspired by the award-winning film of the same name. If you were told that a murderer was to be released into your neighborhood, how would you feel? But what if it weren't only one, but thousands? Could there be a common roadmap to reconciliation? Could there be a shared future after unthinkable evil? If forgiveness is possible after the slaughter of nearly a million in a hundred days in Rwanda, then today, more than ever, we owe it to humanity to explore how one country is addressing perceptual, social-psychological, and spiritual dimensions to achieve a more lasting peace. If forgiveness is possible after genocide, then perhaps there is hope for the comparably smaller rifts that plague our relationships, our communities, and our nation. Based on personal interviews and thorough research, *As We Forgive* returns to the boundary lines of genocide's wounds and traces the route of reconciliation in the lives of Rwandans—victims, widows, orphans, and perpetrators—whose past and future intersect. We find in these stories how suffering, memory, and identity set up roadblocks to forgiveness, while mediation, truth-telling, restitution, and interdependence create bridges to healing. *As We Forgive* explores the pain, the mystery, and the hope through seven compelling stories of those who have made this journey toward reconciliation. The result is a narrative that breathes with humanity and is as haunting as it is hopeful.

As We Forgive: Stories of Reconciliation from Rwanda Details

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From Reader Review As We Forgive: Stories of Reconciliation from Rwanda for online ebook

Buddy Eades says

I'm biased as I have know the author but that doesn't mean I don't know great writing and the scent of Jesus all over this book and story! We need to remember and hear the stories of those who walk together in finding and giving forgiveness. These are the stories that make the gospel shine. Only Jesus can make sense of the slaughter and pain while orchestrating the opportunity for an entire people to find healing and grace. Don't forget this place, these people or this story and pray that you find the message of forgiveness and the gospel the source of your own healing! Thanks Catherine

Alice says

Heartbreaking, difficult to read, yet far more important than all those fun books. I recommend that anybody who is depressed should avoid it, even though it is more worthy of being read than 90% of the books out there.

Alison says

Amazing stories of healing from genocide...amazing.

Mary says

As We Forgive by Catherine Claire Larson is one of those life-changing books that will linger with you the rest of your life. It's not for the fainthearted. It's not for the hard-hearted or those bent toward stubborn unforgiveness. It's primarily a story of hope.

During 100 days of 1994 800,000 people were brutally murdered in Rwanda--a genocide swifter in execution than Nazi gas chambers. Imagine Denver and Colorado Springs--every man, woman and child--suddenly gone from our population and you'll appreciate the scope of the horror. (And go look on a map of Africa. Trace your finger due South of Uganda, due West of the Congo and you'll appreciate how little this country is.)

As We Forgive shares the stories of genocide survivors, recounting the unspeakable. But it does not stop there. Larson pulls back the curtain of the most ostentatious acts of forgiveness I've witnessed, where genocide survivors choose to forgive those who perpetrated such violence.

Together, through reconciliation practices and restorative justice, they are rebuilding their country from the ruins of hatred--all on the back of the One who still bears the scars for our sins today.

I came away from this book changed, deeply moved, and inspired. Having seen the power of God to help

people forgive the seeming unforgiveable, it gave me hope that my own wrestling with forgiveness would end in hope. I also appreciated that none of the forgiveness modeled was simple or easy or quickly won, nor does the book purport that reconciliation is merely forgiveness while forgetting. For true restoration to occur, the person perpetrating the atrocity must first fully own his/her own sin and grieve it as such. And for the person who was sinned against to heal, he/she must revisit the place of grief in order to heal.

All this dovetails beautifully into the message God's been birthing in me--to help people who suffer silently to tell the truth about their pasts, to choose the difficult path of forgiveness, in order to heal.

If God can reach into a genocide victim's heart and offer peace; if He can transform a murderer into a productive member of a reconciled society; then surely He can transform your pain today. That's the patent hope this book gives. It's a gift to all of us. And I pray it's a gift all open.

Mariane Randall says

I found this not only very informative about the Rwanda genocide but inspiring as well. I listened to it and enjoyed audible's recording. would love to refer back to it for my own personal forgiveness journeys. may need to purchase the book as well.

Debbie says

This book tells seven personal stories of experiences during the genocide, its aftermath, and how they came to forgiveness. These accounts are intense, vivid, and powerful. The people in these stories came from different areas and had different experiences, giving the reader a good idea of what happened during the genocide and afterward. The book is worth reading for these stories alone.

The narratives effectively show the struggle of how to forgive and gain peace. However, after each story, the author also comments on various methods of forgiveness and reconciliation and on restorative justice. To me, those comments felt distant and clinical in contrast to the intensely intimate view of pain and forgiveness given in the narrative. Except for one chart/argument given by the author in the first section (which I felt tried to make a complex subject too simplistic and neat), the information she gives is useful and relevant. This information is geared toward anyone, no matter their religion (or lack of one).

Though the author doesn't focus on Christian principles of forgiveness, the Rwandans described in these accounts are Christians or become Christians and this is what allows them to forgive.

The violence described during the genocide is not explicit or gory in detail, though it is still heart-rending at times. I'd recommend this powerful book to anyone struggling with forgiveness or who wants to know more about the Rwandan genocide and what's happening there now.

Jessica Long says

Deeply moving book although painful to read. Wonderful insight into the process of healing and reconciliation.

Laura says

A compassionate but honest account of the lives of the survivors of genocide. Truly inspiring. Well written and although the stories are hard to read at times, the triumph of forgiveness over hate makes this a must read.

Amy Kannel says

This book helped validate why I have had such an interest, for more than four years now, in Rwanda and the 1994 genocide: “With the gift of listening comes the gift of healing, because listening to your brothers or sisters until they have said the last words in their hearts is healing and consoling. Someone has said that is possible 'to listen a person's soul into existence.' I like that.” --Catherine de Hueck Doherty / “listening is the greatest form of loving. ...In a place where everyone has a story of horror to tell, people become so accustomed to it that few stop to ask or listen to the pain of someone else.” For me, reading about Africa is a way to listen--and listening matters. This book tells powerful stories not just of the horrors, but of the beauty that God has wrought from the tragedy in Rwanda.

Bethany Harper says

Wow. One of the best books I have ever read. At times, I had to shut this book, close my eyes, and take a deep breath. The stories of the horrific, catastrophic events that the people of Rwanda went through cut through to the heart. Yet, there is an amazing beauty inside of the pages because forgiveness and reconciliation has started. These stories are present day examples of Christ's forgiveness for us on a smaller, but still extraordinary, scale. I am so glad I was able to read this book. All I can say, is thank you Catherine Claire Larson for writing this book, and thank you, Jesus Christ, for going to the cross in order that we might be forgiven of our sins.

April says

I'd wanted to read this book ever since I saw a review of it in World magazine last year. A few years back, I was reading Lee Camp's 'Mere Discipleship' for a Bible study. In one chapter, Lee points out that Rwanda was one of the most "Christian" nations in Africa and could have been used as an example of the success of Christian missions...before the genocide. He asks the question, how could people in the one of the most Christian societies in Africa turn on and kill hundreds and thousands of their neighbors...and even priests and pastors betray to death people who sought refuge in churches? Painful questions, and not easily answered. So it grabbed my attention when I saw the description of a book about the people of Rwanda learning to forgive and live together after the genocide.

'As We Forgive' is a painful read. It look unflinchingly in the face of death, violence, rape, and shame, but

without sensationalizing them. Forgiveness here is not cheap or easy. It doesn't mean pretending the harm never happened or that it didn't have horrible consequences. It doesn't mean that the crime was excusable. 'As We Forgive' is also a beautiful read, because in its stories the gospel of Christ shines as the answer to evil...and also the only thing that can make forgiveness possible.

Jason says

What does forgiveness really look like? How can you forgive someone who seemingly took everything away that made life worth living: family, homes, and trust? What kind of power is it that can look someone who has hurt you in the deepest way, and forgive them? This is what As We Forgive is about, specifically how do Rwandan survivors of the 1994 genocide forgive those who broke into their homes, chased them down in the wild and sought to wipe them out.

The 1994 Rwandan genocide, where Hutu attacked and murdered over 800,000 Tutsi's is hard to fathom in its brutality and suddenness. Larson, on staff with Prison Fellowship Ministries, writes of a defined process that leads to genocide and in reverse, of a process that leads forgiveness.

She has focused on seven specific individuals, in three chapter segments, to tell an arc of a story from before, during, and after the genocide. The three chapter segments are broken up by seven interlude chapters that reflect on what the real applications of forgiveness, comfort, and what repairing broken relationships looks like.

By telling personal stories in an engaging writing style, Larson does a fine job of taking the reader from the abstract to the very real and personal. She only introduces the political issues that motivated the genocide, and steps out of the way to tell of very human stories of brutality and in return peace and reconciliation.

The writing is never explicit when stories of the genocidal acts are told, but they are hard to read, especially when old neighbors and friends turn on each other. There are times after reading an especially difficult passage, I had to put aside the book for a day or so, because of the sheer horror involved. At the same time, reading of murderers reaching out to assist in rebuilding their victims lives, local justice that seeks to restore and not retribution, and victims seeking to point those that did so much evil to Christ is earth shaking in its own right.

Larson identifies eight steps that genocidal groups take to strip their victims of their humanity. By telling seven stories of reconciliation, forgiveness, she contrasts man's kingdom versus God's. The final step of genocide is denial. With powerful stories of reconciliation, she tells stories of truth that re-humanize victim and perpetrator alike.

As We Forgive needs to read as a testament to a group of people who are changed by otherworldly power, in the hope that the same power that saved them from an ongoing spiral of evil will do wonders around the world.

Marti says

These are stories about the depth of the human spirit and its capacity to endure unbearable loss, to inflict unimaginable cruelty, and how two deeply divided groups of people can repent, forgive and reconcile for the good of themselves and their country. It seems like it would be impossible. These stories tell how it happened, and is still occurring. Amazing

Amy says

Overly evangelical and lacking in any information beyond some pretty gruesome anecdotes. The subject matter is fascinating, and I feel like so much more could have been done with it. I would have like to see more perspective about the consequences of forgiveness on a societal level, and how can a society facilitate reconciliation.

Jennifer Daniels says

This book will invite you to pray. -out of thankfulness, out of horror, out of fear, out of humility that comes from an honest look at those who show mercy in the face of brutal devastation. This is not for the faint of heart. But is for those who want to trust God to forgive them and want to forgive others. Amazing.
