

On Forgiving: A Primer



Contemplations by
Rand Eastwood:

Forgiving Gets Easier With Practice

...

Forgiving The Unforgivable

...

Giving & Forgiving

Also by Rand Eastwood:



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About The Author:

Rand Eastwood is an author, blogger, artist & craftsman living in Las Vegas, NV. Certified in both *nutrition* & *ancestral health*, he is a healthy nutrition & lifestyle advocate. Under *Eastwood Innovations, LLC* he operates his author website, *Lifeology Store*, *Rand's Bookshop*, & *Woodlands Press*. His books are available on *Amazon*, and some of his fiction is published on his author website under *My Fiction*. His much-anticipated epic novel *PRIMEVAL* was released on Amazon in September of 2025, and is currently available in trade paperback. [Subscribe to his author website](#) and/or [follow his Amazon author page](#) for updates.

Contents

A Note From The Author • Page 3

Forgiving Gets Easier With Practice • Page 5

Forgiving The Unforgivable • Page 11

Giving & Forgiving • Page 17

A Note From The Author

Earlier in my life, I was struggling heavily with an issue—which at the time seemed unforgivable—but I knew that somehow, some way, I would need to let go of it and move on, if I was ever to move forward in my life.

But I simply wasn't able to do it...

So finally, in sheer desperation, I went online late one night and began searching for...well, something....*anything* that might help me deal with that particular issue, which had weighed so heavily on my heart and mind for so long.

And then, to my good fortune, I found it! And it worked!

Long story short, I decided to [share that experience on the blog](#), and continued to explore the subject of forgiveness, discovered more resources in the process, and continued sharing what I found, what I learned.

So now, I've decided to compile those blog articles and publish them together as this free downloadable ebook [On Forgiving: A Primer](#), in the hope that others also find it helpful, as well as make it more shareable.

I hope it is, in fact, helpful to someone out there.

Enjoy!



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(PS: Between the following three sections (which were originally three separate blog articles) there are duplicate sources and quotes listed; however, I decided to leave them as is, because they are cited under different contexts, and also because some readers may skip to a specific section that they feel is most relevant to their situation, and thus will still benefit from them).

Forgiving Gets Easier With Practice

(read the original Lifeology article here)

We Are All Human

For one, you come to the realization that you have no idea what others are going through. They could be going through hard times, a breakup or divorce, a job that's not working out, financial hardship, illness in the family, you name it.

And if they're going through really hard times themselves, they're going to be focused on their own lives and problems, they're going to be in defense mode, and thus more apt to treat you badly or hurt you, though often unintentionally.

And then there are those who never grow up, don't pursue personal growth or increased knowledge or education, and therefore do stupid things, make bad choices, and have no clue how they're impacting others in their life, how they may be hurting you or anyone else through their own carelessness or incompetence—but again, it's often entirely unintentional.

As Archbishop Emeritus [Desmond Tutu](#) points out in *The Book of Forgiving*: forgiveness is not weakness, and does not mean being spineless, nor does it mean one doesn't get angry.

He explains:

"It is a remarkable feat to be able to see past the inhumanity of the behavior and recognize the humanity of the person committing the atrocious acts. This is not weakness. This is heroic strength, the noblest strength of the human spirit."

Forgiving Is For You

But on the other hand, there are some people who are just plain evil, and hurt you or others intentionally.

But even so, you understand that forgiveness isn't for *them*, it's for *you*.

There's an old saying:

*Forgive others, not necessarily because
they deserve forgiveness, but because
you deserve peace of mind.*

The fact of the matter is, if you can't, or don't, forgive them, then they will continue to hurt you over and over again in your mind, because you've never let go of it, never released it from your thoughts. You're watching an instant replay of the hurtful incident over and over and over.

Eventually, you've got to hit STOP, EJECT the tape, and be done with it—or it will never end.

Benjamin Franklin wrote something similar in [Poor Richard's Almanack](#):

"Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; revenging one makes you but even with him; forgiving it sets you above him."

And here's another example of this common habit, from a story I recently came across online:

A woman had some friends betray her, and she spent six months being angry and bitter about it. She told anyone who would listen how awful they had been to her. But eventually, she realized she had been telling the same story over and over for all those months. So one day she asked herself: if nobody was around to hear me complain, would I still tell this story? She answered honestly: no. So she decided that at that point, it wasn't what they had done to her that continued to hurt her, but that she had held on to the incident, the story she was telling herself and others, for too long. So she finally let it go and moved on.

Now, in the above context, I equate the term "stop complaining" to "forgiveness".

Along those same lines, [Robert Greene](#), author of such bestsellers as [The 48 Laws of Power](#) and [Mastery](#), writes in [The 50th Law](#):

"By nature we are emotional creatures. It is how we primarily react to events; only afterwards are we able to see that such emotional responses can be destructive and need to be reined in. You cannot repress this part of human nature, nor should you ever try. It is like a flood that will overwhelm you all the more for your attempts to dam it up. What you want is for those endless emotions that assail you during the day to wash over you, to never hold on to one single emotion for very long. You are able to let go of any kind of obsessive feeling. If someone says something that bothers you, you find a way to move quickly past the feeling—either to excuse what they said, to make it less important, or to forget.

Forgetting is a skill that you must develop in order to have emotional

flow. If you cannot help but feel anger or disgust in the moment, make it a point to not let it remain the following day. When you hold on to emotions like that, it is as if you put blinders on your eyes. For that amount of time, you see and feel only what this emotion dictates, falling behind events. Your mind stops on feelings of failure, disappointment, and mistrust, giving you that awkwardness of someone out of tune with the moment. Without realizing it, all of your strategies become infected by these feelings, pushing you off course.

To combat this, you must learn the art of counterbalance. When you are fearful, force yourself to act in a bolder fashion than usual. When you feel inordinate hate, find some object of love or admiration that you can focus on with intensity. One strong emotion tends to cancel out the other and help you move past it."

He also writes:

"If you had some terribly painful experience in the past, you could choose to let that pain sit there and you could soak in it. On the other hand, you could decide to covert it into anger, a cause to promote, or some form of action. Or you could choose to simply drop it and move on, relishing the freedom and power that that brings you. No one can take away these options or force your response. It is all up to you."

And, much like the prior example of "stop complaining", in the above context I view "let go", "get past it", "drop it", "move on" and "focus on something good instead", as various means, or techniques, of forgiveness.

So again, if you don't forgive others for their transgressions, you will never be able to let it go, move on with your life. The above story used the term "complaining", or to stop complaining, but it's essentially the same concept as forgiving: let it go, stop ruminating on it, stop running the story over and over in your own mind as well as to others, and get on with your life.

That's *what forgiveness is*.

Archbishop [Desmond Tutu](#) also writes of this in his book *The Book of Forgiving*:

"Without forgiveness, we remain tethered to the person who harmed us. We are bound with chains of bitterness, tied together, trapped. Until we can forgive the person who harmed us, that person will hold the keys to our happiness; that person will be our jailor. When we forgive, we take back control of our own fate and our feelings. We become our own

liberators. We don't forgive to help the other person. We don't forgive for others. We forgive for ourselves. Forgiveness, in other words, is the best form of self-interest."

And in [Mind is the Master | Byways Of Blessedness](#), renowned author and philosopher [James Allen](#) writes:

"The remembering of injuries is spiritual darkness; the fostering of resentment is spiritual suicide. To resort to the spirit and practice of forgiveness is the beginning of enlightenment; it is also the beginning of peace and happiness. There is no rest for him who broods over slights and injuries and wrongs; no quiet repose of mind for him who feels that he has been unjustly treated, and who schemes how best to act for the discomfiture of his enemy. How can happiness dwell in a heart that is so disturbed by ill-will? Do birds resort to a burning bush wherein to build and sing? Neither can happiness inhabit in that breast that is aflame with burning thoughts of resentment. Nor can wisdom come and dwell where such folly resides."

Forgiving Takes Practice

But [Desmond Tutu](#) also emphasizes that forgiving takes practice:

"Forgiveness takes practice, honesty, open-mindedness, and a willingness (even if it is a weary willingness) to try. This healing journey is not a primer—a book that we must read and understand. This healing journey is a practice—something in which we must participate."

He goes on:

"Forgiveness, like any other quality—compassion, kindness, or generosity—must be fostered and developed. The ability to forgive is innate but, like any natural talent, it is perfected with practice. The practice of forgiveness is emotional and spiritual work."

So for practice, you can start small. [Anne Lamott](#) writes of this in her book [Small Victories: Spotting Improbable Moments of Grace](#) :

"I decided I was starting out with my sights aimed too high. As C. S. Lewis says in [Mere Christianity](#), "If we really want to learn how to forgive, perhaps we had better start with something easier than the Gestapo."

So I decided to put everyone I've ever lived with, slept with, or been reviewed by on hold, and to start with someone I barely knew whom I

had hated only for awhile.”

She went on to describe a particular relationship she chose, how she struggled with it, and how she was then able to forgive the person—and as a result, how much she, and her life, improved afterward.

(Along those lines, I’ve also come to believe that there may actually be two types of forgiveness: forgiving others for *what they do*, and forgiving others *for who they are*—i.e., *the type of person they are*—but that’s for another article, another day...)

So no, you don’t have to start out with those who have been huge burdens in your life or caused you great pain, or try to forgive everyone at once; you can simply identify the small things that are getting under your skin, and start with those.

Once you begin to forgive the small things, and experience the peace of mind that results, you’ll be able to move up to bigger and bigger things, and successfully forgive those, too. [Even the seemingly unforgivable things.](#)

And [Dr. Wayne Dyer](#), in his article [How To Forgive Someone Who Has Hurt You: In 15 Steps](#) mentions practice in [Step 10: Practice Giving](#):

“In the midst of arguments or disagreements, practice giving rather than taking before you exit. Giving involves leaving the ego behind. While it wants to win and show its superiority by being contrary and disrespectful, your Tao nature wants to be at peace and live in harmony. You can reduce your quarreling time to almost zero if you practice this...”

In Summary

Keep practicing forgiveness, and before you know it, you’ll likely find that you’re [letting it all go](#), all that self-imposed weight is being lifted from your shoulders, and you’re finally able to move on.

And even though you may find forgiving others to be difficult at first—you’ll soon find that it definitely gets easier with practice!

Forgiving The Unforgivable

(read the original Lifeology article here)

Forgiving To Move Forward

There was a time in my life when I was dealing with a lot of problems, a lot of baggage from my past, and had reached a point where I really needed to let go of all of it and move forward with my life.

It's a simple idea, to let go of the past in order to move forward. And it's a simple idea to forgive people who have wronged you, who have hurt you, who have taken something from you that you can never get back—such as time, money, property, trust...or even your heart.

But sometimes, it can be incredibly difficult to do. In some cases, certain people from your past, and the problems, circumstances and hardships they brought about through their mean-spirited (or outright evil) actions, have hurt you so badly, even destroyed your life at the time, that you simply cannot bring yourself to forgive them.

But forgive you must—you know this—in order for you to finally let go and move forward.

But how?

I was in this very dilemma many years ago, when my entire life had crashed down around me and I was going through some therapy to try to get my head back on straight, deal with my issues, and move forward in my life, in what I hoped would be a healthier, more productive way.

For most of my issues, this was very doable. But for this one issue in particular, I found it seemingly impossible...

Certain people from my past had hurt me so badly, caused me so many problems in my life, and damaged me, my mind, and my future, to the point that my capacity for living a normal, healthy, productive life was handicapped, if not completely destroyed. How could I possibly forgive them for what they did to me, the repercussions of which have negatively impacted me my entire life?

Yet, I knew I had to. I would never be able to move forward, to change, to grow, to build a new life, if I dragged this issue along, unable to put it in the past where it belonged. And the only way to put it in the past was to forgive them. But how? I tried. I really did. But after extensive time and effort, I found that I simply couldn't do it.

Finally exasperated, I turned to the Internet. I spent an entire evening searching online, hoping that some little gem of wisdom would miraculously surface, from a world of infinite possibilities, and help me do what I so desperately needed to do.

And to my surprise, it did!

What Forgiveness Is Not

Unfortunately, I did not document, nor do I recall, where I found the following helpful approach to forgiveness. And thorough online searching since has not reproduced it. So today I have no idea where it came from—perhaps it was sent to me from a divine source?—I suppose I'll never really know. But it went something like this:

***Forgiveness isn't necessarily saying,
"You didn't do anything wrong."***

***Forgiveness isn't necessarily saying,
"Everything is okay now."***

***Forgiveness can be simply saying,
"I hereby forfeit my right to hurt you
just because you hurt me first."***

Pretty simple, huh?

So, I decided that if forgiveness can be as simple as deciding to no longer hold a grudge against someone who hurt me in the past—in other words, to no longer wish them ill will—without pretending that they are innocent of wrongdoing, or that what they did no longer matters...

...well, I decided I could do that.

Finally, a way to forgive the worst transgressors of my past...

Since then, I've learned that Archbishop Emeritus [Desmond Tutu](#) also echoes this sentiment in [The Book of Forgiving](#):

"...forgiving does not condone an act. Forgiveness does not relieve someone of responsibility for what they have done. Forgiveness does not erase accountability. It is not about turning a blind eye or even turning the other cheek. It is not about letting someone off the hook or saying it is okay to do something monstrous. Forgiveness is simply about understanding that every one of us is both inherently good and inherently flawed."

And finally, in the words of [Morgan Richard Olivier](#), from her book *Blooming Bare*:

"You can't create chaos in the lives of others and expect peace to come to yours. No matter what they did or how you feel, causing hurt to others will never bring healing to you."

Forgiving Elevates You

And not only does this understanding make difficult forgiving possible, but it is also a way of elevating yourself to a higher level of consciousness. I've always tried to avoid "lowering myself" to the level of those who hurt me or otherwise conduct themselves in a selfish, inconsiderate, or unacceptable manner. But if, in a sense of retaliation, I were to lower myself to their level, conduct myself as they do, how does that make me any different than them? How does that help me achieve a higher level of consciousness?

Benjamin Franklin wrote of this in *Poor Richard's Almanack*:

"Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; revenging one makes you but even with him; forgiving it sets you above him."

By looking at forgiveness in this same way—understanding that holding a grudge, or harboring bad thoughts and feelings, or longing for revenge, or hurtful words or behavior (or any other type of ill will directed toward others) is, in effect, conducting myself at a lower level of consciousness—I realized that forgiving others helps me achieve a higher level of consciousness.

Forgiving Is For Your Own Wellbeing

And it's also crucial to understand: you forgive others, not just for *their* sake, but for *yours*. There's an old saying:

***Forgive others, not because
they deserve forgiveness,
but because you deserve peace.***

Or, to quote the comedian [Lily Tomlin](#):

***"Forgiveness means giving
up all hope for a better past."***

The fact of the matter is, if you can't, or don't, forgive them, then they will continue to hurt you over and over again in your mind, because you've never let go of it, never released it from your thoughts. You're watching an instant replay of the hurtful incident over and over and over. Eventually, you've got to hit STOP, and EJECT the tape, and be done with it—or *it will never end*.

And to repeat a segment from the first section, *Forgiveness Gets Easier With Practice*, here's another example of this common habit, which I recently came across online:

A woman had some friends betray her, and she spent six months being angry and bitter about it. She told anyone who would listen how awful they had been to her. But eventually, she realized she had been telling the same story over and over for all those months. So one day she asked herself: if nobody was around to hear me complain, would I still tell this story? She answered honestly: no. So she decided that at that point, it wasn't what they had done to her that continued to hurt her, but that she had held on to the incident, the story she was telling herself and others, for too long. So she finally let it go and moved on.

So again, if you don't forgive others for their transgressions, you will never be able to let it go, move on with your life. The above story used the term "complaining" (or to stop complaining), but it's essentially the same concept as forgiving: let it go, stop ruminating on it, stop running the story over and over in your own mind as well as to others, and get on with your life.

Consider the following poem, often misattributed to Shakespeare (the actual author is unknown):

"If men only understood All the emptiness and acting Of the sleeping and the waking Of the souls they judge so blindly, Of the hearts they pierce so unkindly, They, with gentler words and feeling, Would apply the balm of healing—If they only understood."

And yes, this line by [Shakespeare](#), from the play *As You Like It*:

"Kindness, nobler ever than revenge."

In *Mind is the Master | Byways Of Blessedness*, author [James Allen](#) writes:

"The remembering of injuries is spiritual darkness; the fostering of resentment is spiritual suicide. To resort to the spirit and practice of forgiveness is the beginning of enlightenment; it is also the beginning of peace and happiness. There is no rest for him who broods over slights and injuries and wrongs; no quiet repose of mind for him who feels that

he has been unjustly treated, and who schemes how best to act for the discomfiture of his enemy. How can happiness dwell in a heart that is so disturbed by ill-will? Do birds resort to a burning bush wherein to build and sing? Neither can happiness inhabit in that breast that is aflame with burning thoughts of resentment. Nor can wisdom come and dwell where such folly resides."

Desmond Tutu also writes of this in [The Book of Forgiving](#):

"Without forgiveness, we remain tethered to the person who harmed us. We are bound with chains of bitterness, tied together, trapped. Until we can forgive the person who harmed us, that person will hold the keys to our happiness; that person will be our jailor. When we forgive, we take back control of our own fate and our feelings. We become our own liberators. We don't forgive to help the other person. We don't forgive for others. We forgive for ourselves. Forgiveness, in other words, is the best form of self-interest."

And finally, lack of forgiveness can even be detrimental to our health. Consider what Florence Scovel Shinn wrote in [The Game of Life and How to Play It](#):

"Continual criticism produces rheumatism, as critical, inharmonious thoughts cause unnatural deposits in the blood, which settle in the joints."

"False growths are caused by jealousy, hatred, unforgiveness, fear, etc. Every disease is caused by a mind not at ease. I said once, in my class, 'There is no use asking anyone 'What's the matter with you?' we might just as well say, 'Who's the matter with you?' Unforgiveness is the most prolific cause of disease. It will harden arteries or liver, and affect the eye-sight. In its train are endless ills."

"Any inharmony on the external, indicates there is mental inharmony. 'As the within, so the without.' "

"Man's only enemies are within himself. 'And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.' Personality is one of the last enemies to be overcome, as this planet is taking its initiation in love. It was Christ's message – 'Peace on Earth, good will towards man.' The enlightened man, therefore, endeavors to perfect himself upon his neighbor. His work is with himself, to send out goodwill and blessings to every man, and the marvelous thing is, that if one blesses a man he has no power to harm him."

In Summary

So remember: forgiveness, in those difficult or seemingly impossible cases, can be simply saying:

***“I hereby forfeit my right to hurt you
just because you hurt me first.”***

Understanding this helps make forgiving possible, and [unconditional](#), even in difficult cases; and, even though at first it may be difficult to do, I’ve come to find that it [gets easier with practice](#). And ultimately, forgiveness also helps us to achieve a higher level of consciousness.

And coming to understand all of this then enabled me to forgive those people who hurt me so badly in my past, to release the pain, the bad memories, the retaliatory thoughts and feelings, the ill will—all of those unhealthy and inhibiting preoccupations—and finally move forward and live my life.

And live I do!



Giving & Forgiving

(read the original Lifeology article here)

I've come to believe that true giving, and true forgiving, should both be offered unconditionally.

Giving

As for giving, Leo Tolstoy characterizes the act nicely in his collection *A Calendar of Wisdom*:

"Kindness and virtue come from the heart, and should be performed without thought for the opinion of others, or of future rewards."

"We do good to people not in hope of reward, but because we see the divine spirit within everyone."

"The best and easiest way to thwart evil in this world is to respond to it with kind words, return an evil action with good."

And in *Mind is the Master | The Secret of Abounding Happiness*, author James Allen writes:

"As you rise above the sordid self; as you break, one after another, the chains that bind you, will you realize the joy of giving, as distinguished from the misery of grasping—giving of your substance; giving of your intellect; giving of the love and light that is growing within you. You will then understand that it is indeed "more blessed to give than to receive." But the giving must be of the heart without any taint of self, without desire for reward. The gift of pure love is always attended with bliss. If, after you have given, you are wounded because you are not thanked or flattered, or your name put in the paper, know then that your gift was prompted by vanity and not by love, and you were merely giving in order to get; were not really giving, but grasping. Lose yourself in the welfare of others; forget yourself in all that you do; this is the secret of abounding happiness."

Forgiving

As for forgiveness, the word "forgive" comes from the Old English *for-* ("completely") + *giefan* ("to give"), forming *forgiefan*, which meant "to give up" or "to give entirely". The Germanic word functioned as a loan-translation (a word or phrase borrowed from

another language by translating its components literally and word-for-word into the borrowing language) of the Latin *perdonare* (composed of *per-* ("through, completely") and *donare* ("to give as a gift"), to mean "to give completely" and evolved into the Middle English *forgiefen*, which meant "to give up" or "to allow", or "to remit (a debt)" or "to pardon an offense," and eventually became *forgive* in modern English.

Further: The sense of "giving up the desire or power to punish" arose in late Old English, reflecting the idea of completely letting go of a grievance.

The Latin root for the concept of "giving" (from *do-*, "to give") also appears in words like *pardon* and *condone*, both related to forgiving.

So in reality, the concept of *forgiving* is nearly the same—or at least evolved from—that of *giving*.

And just as in *giving*, we cannot truly *forgive* someone while harboring any expectation of apology, remorse, or any change in their behavior, or even in their attitude.

Archbishop [Desmond Tutu](#) writes of this in *The Book of Forgiving*:

"Forgiveness is not dependent on the actions of others. Yes, it is certainly easier to offer forgiveness when the perpetrator expresses remorse and offers some sort of reparation or restitution. Then, you can feel as if you have been paid back in some way. You can say, "I am willing to forgive you for stealing my pen, and after you give me my pen back, I shall forgive you." This is the most familiar pattern of forgiveness. In this understanding, forgiveness is something we offer to another, a gift we bestow upon someone, but it is a gift that has strings attached.

The problem is that the strings we attach to the gift of forgiveness become the chains that bind us to the person who harmed us. Those are chains to which the perpetrator holds the key. We may set the conditions for granting our forgiveness, but the person who harmed us decides whether or not the conditions are too onerous to fulfill. We continue to be that person's victim. "I will not speak to you until you say you are sorry!" my young granddaughter, Onalenna, will rage. Her older sister, thinking the demand unfair and unjustified, refuses to apologize. The two remain locked together in a battle of wills bound by mutual resentment. There are two routes out of the impasse: the older Nyaniso can apologize, or Onalenna can decide to forgo the apology and forgive unconditionally.

Unconditional forgiveness is a different model of forgiveness than the gift

with strings. This is forgiveness as a grace, a free gift freely given. In this model, forgiveness frees the person who inflicted the harm from the weight of the victim's whim—what the victim may demand in order to grant forgiveness—and the victim's threat of vengeance. But it also frees the one who forgives. The one who offers forgiveness as a grace is immediately untethered from the yoke that bound him or her to the person who caused the harm. When you forgive, you are free to move on in life, to grow, to no longer be a victim. When you forgive, you slip the yoke, and your future is unshackled from your past."

So, just as in the act of *giving*—that we should give to others without expectation of reciprocity, reward, or even appreciation—the same holds in the act of *forgiving*—that we should forgive others unconditionally, [even for seemingly unforgivable acts](#).

And in [Mind is the Master | Byways Of Blessedness](#), James Allen also writes:

"Hatred ceases by not-hatred—by forgiveness, which is very beautiful, and is sweeter and more effective than revenge. It is the beginning of love, of that divine love that does not seek its own; and he who practises it, who perfects himself in it, comes at last to realise that blessed state wherein the torments of pride and vanity and hatred and retaliation are forever dispelled, and good-will and peace are unchanging and unlimited. In that state of calm, silent bliss, even forgiveness passes away, and is no longer needed, for he who has reached it sees no evil to resent but only ignorance and delusion on which to have compassion, and forgiveness is only needed so long as there is any tendency to resent, retaliate, and take offence. Equal love towards all is the perfect law, the perfect state in which all lesser states find their completion. Forgiveness is one of the doorways in the faultless temple of Love Divine."

In Summary

We should simply give, or forgive, out of love—and that is all.



Also by Rand Eastwood:



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Rand Eastwood is an author, blogger, artist & craftsman living in Las Vegas, NV. Certified in both *nutrition* & *ancestral health*, he is a healthy nutrition & lifestyle advocate. Under [Eastwood Innovations, LLC](#) he operates his author website, [Lifeology Store](#), [Rand's Bookshop](#), & [Woodlands Press](#). His books are available on [Amazon](#), and some of his fiction is published on his author website under [My Fiction](#). His much-anticipated epic novel [PRIMEVAL](#) was released on Amazon in September of 2025, and is currently available in trade paperback. [Subscribe to his author website](#) and/or [follow his Amazon author page](#) for updates.

