Holy Spirit swiftly convicted me of my need to honor my parents (Eph. 6:2-3). I knew that unless I forgave my parents, especially Dad, I would be stuck forever in bitterness and hatred.

I took God's Word seriously. I wanted to experience peace in my parental relationships. I wanted to be free from the ugly memories. But my pain ran deep. Just thinking about my dad, I would almost throw up. Yet Jesus had forgiven me, so I knew I must also forgive Dad.

In the beginning, though, I didn't understand forgiveness. I thought that if I forgave Dad, I'd be re-opening all the emotional areas that he had violated, that I'd be exposing myself again to his hurting me. Finally I realized that forgiveness doesn't mean agreeing with what some person did to me. Nor does it mean that what they did doesn't matter. No, forgiveness was simply choosing to release Dad from my vengeance. That enabled me to begin removing the hardness from my heart and clearing my communication with the Lord.

"I realized that forgiveness doesn't mean agreeing with what some person did to me."

Then I pleaded with God to give me a new heart for my father. Even though I'd forgiven him, I kept seeing pictures in my mind of terrible events involving my father and me. God showed me that these "instant replays" were a ploy of Satan to challenge the Lord's working in my life.

I took authority over those awful memories. Every time they tried to haunt me, I commanded them to leave in the name of Jesus. Also, I confessed out loud that I had forgiven my dad. It was a real battle, but eventually I felt a new freedom from the past.

Beside the whole issue of bad memories, the Lord gave me another clear choice. For years I had grumbled about my dad not meeting my needs. But I sensed God saying, "You had much higher expectations than your father was ever able to fulfill. Are you willing to accept the fact that your father will *never* be able to meet your needs?"

I was at a point of decision. One path was clinging to my "rights" to hold hatred toward him. Or I could let go of my dream of having a perfect father and allow God to bring healing.

I chose the latter, releasing all my expectations of the "perfect" father. God would be my Father—I could trust that He would never hurt me. At that instant, I felt as though fifty tons rolled off my back.

Then, in February 1982, my father was diagnosed with lung cancer. Chemotherapy started immediately. My greatest fear was that Dad would die without Christ. Interestingly, that fear showed me the depth of forgiveness I had already experienced toward him.

Due to Dad's illness, my sister came to know the Lord. I encouraged her to speak with him about her relationship with Christ. One day my sister was talking with him when I heard her call me.

"What is it?" I answered.

"Dad just doesn't understand that he needs to ask Jesus into his life in order to get to heaven." I knelt down in front of my father and looked him straight in the eyes—something I had *never* been able to do. "Pop, what is it you don't understand?"

"I don't believe in hell," he said. We talked for several minutes about the Bible's teaching that hell is a real place. "Your spirit will leave your body when you die," I explained, "and you'll be eternally separated from God."

Leaning forward, I continued. "Pop, we're a family. We're going to heaven and we want you with us!" His face relaxed, and then he said the words I had prayed for years to hear: "What do I have to do?"

During the next few minutes, my sister and I had the glorious honor of leading our dad to the Lord. He prayed with us, asking for God's forgiveness and accepting Christ as his Savior. In the coming months, I saw God working within him. My dad had been a very bitter, angry man. All that anger seemed to fall away as the Lord's Spirit gave him a new calm and peace.

Another important event took place before Dad died the following June. He'd never spoken to me about my former lesbian involvement, but I knew he was ashamed of me. The cancer had gone to his brain and I wasn't really sure he would understand what I was about to say. But it was so heavy on my heart that I had to tell him.

I leaned over him and talked quietly. "Pop, I never really was the daughter you expected me to be. I'm so sorry about that. Please forgive me."

Dad gave no visible response, but I continued on. "You weren't the father I expected either. But I've forgiven you. And God's given me such a love for you." My tears flowed as I kissed his forehead. "I'm so glad we'll be together forever with Him."

The whole time I talked, Dad said nothing. Whether or not he comprehended me, I have such joy in knowing from his heavenly vantage-point now he sees all the work God has done and is doing in my life. And I know he must be very pleased.

In the years since Dad died, God has done such a marvelous work in my life. As He released me from hatred, unforgiveness and bitterness, my bondage to homosexuality was broken. And He has given me true love and forgiveness toward my precious parents. How I thank Him, for now I love them the way He always intended. •

Adapted from ***Out of Egypt: Leaving Lesbianism Behind*** *by Jeanette Howard (Monarch Publications). © 1991 by Jeanette Howard. Used by permission. You can use the enclosed response card to order your copy of this outstanding book.*

OFFICE NEWS

Exodus Receives Matching Grant

We announced last month that Exodus has been awarded a $20,000 "matching grant." Two anonymous donors have agreed to match funds dollar-for-dollar which are contributed between now and January 31, 1998. (For example, if you give $25, we receive $50.) Gifts must be $25 or more to qualify.

Last year, we received a similar grant and, due to your generous year-end giving, we were able to enter 1997 on a solid financial footing.

Donors who wish to be part of the matching grant program should indicate their desire on the enclosed response card. Thanks for considering this opportunity!

Just a Reminder...

For your contribution to be deductible on 1997 tax returns, your check must be written and dated in 1997, *and* the envelope postmarked on or before December 31, 1997. We suggest you mail early to meet this deadline. •

EVANGELICAL COUNCIL FOR FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
ECFA
MEMBER

The symbol of trust

WHAT DOES THIS SYMBOL MEAN?

Exodus is a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), signifying high standards in fundraising and financial management. ECFA includes over 850 Christian organizations, including the American Tract Society, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Christian Research Institute, Focus on the Family, International Bible Society, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, The Navigators, Promise Keepers, World Vision, and Youth For Christ. A pamphlet describing ECFA's standards in more detail is enclosed.

Lesbian Group Protests Conference

PORTLAND, OR—About a dozen members of the Lesbian Avengers showed up to protest the October 24–25 Portland Fellowship (PF) conference on homosexuality and the church. PF board chair and former lesbian, Anne Paulk (center, with name badge) talked briefly with the protestors. The conference attracted about 200 delegates. •

Attention, Readers!

Here are several items for readers on our mailing list—

• ***Premiums.*** Readers occasionally contact us, complaining that they have not received a certain tape or book mentioned in a past newsletter.

Sometimes, we make mistakes in processing orders. But more often, these readers have forgotten to check the appropriate box on their response card. A book or other item is *not* sent to you unless you specifically request it. This ensures that a maximum portion of your gift is tax-deductible. (If you send a gift of $25 and receive a book worth $15, only the balance—$10—is tax-deductible. This information is noted on your donation receipt.)

• ***Prayer Requests.*** We recognize that your prayer needs are important. But we are finding it impossible to keep up with the huge number of requests being sent in each month from our readers. Therefore we have changed that portion of our response card. We encourage you to contact your local Exodus ministry for ongoing support. A current list of Exodus-approved ministries is available free upon request.

• ***No Longer Want This Newsletter?*** Our printing and mailing costs are soaring as we continue to add hundreds of new readers every month. A small fraction of our readers contribute toward these printing and postage costs. Please consider supporting Exodus in order for us to continue this publication. At the same time, we will gladly continue your subscription for those of you who enjoy this publication but cannot afford to offer financial support. •

CALENDAR

• ***Jan. 24, 1998/San Diego.*** "Freedom for the Homosexual Struggler," a conference sponsored by Transforming Congregations, featuring Joe Dallas. Info: Rev. James Hill, 619/278-2433

• ***Feb. 7/Dallas.*** "Freedom Seminar," featuring Eddie Traughber and Randy Thomas. Sponsored by Living Hope. Info: 817/459-2507.

• ***Mar. 6–7/Burnaby, B.C.*** "The Church and Homosexuality" Conference, featuring J.I. Packer, Joe Dallas, Marjorie Hopper and Bob Davies. Sponsored by Another Chance Ministries. Info: 604/434-9404.

• ***Mar. 6–8/Washington DC.*** Annual P-FOX conference (Parents & Friends of Ex-gays), featuring Mrs. Alveda King (niece of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr), Don & Jan Frank, John & Anne Paulk, and others. Info: 202/371-0800.

• ***Mar. 13–15/Orlando.*** Exodus Southeast Regional Conference, hosted by Eleutheros. Info: 407/629-5770.

• ***Apr. 25–27/Waikiki, Hawaii.*** Annual Hawaiian Islands Ministries conference, featuring Sy Rogers and others (not Exodus-sponsored). Info: 808/988-9777.

• ***Apr. 30–May 2/San Diego.*** Annual "Trauma & Sexuality Conference," featuring David Kyle Foster and others (not Exodus-sponsored). Info: 619/660-1140.