

TUF(R) Forgiveness Exams
Three: Exercising Freedom

The Practice of Exercising Freedom
Working Out Detached Attachment

This is the third examen exploring *TUF(R)* forgiveness. Here the focus is on exercising the freedom to act lovingly toward others through detached attachment. Sometimes our ability to forgive others in a healthy manner is compromised by our being attached to them in unhealthy ways. Detached attachment is an emotional connection to another person that is free of self-serving attachment. For instance, in a co-dependent relationship partners “help” and care for one another, in part, because of their own need to be needed in that other person’s life. When you can detach from your fears of disappointing or being rejected by others, you are *free to love them* in ways you never could before.

- I. Begin this practice with an examination of your attachment to the person who has hurt you. Generally, we are hurt the most deeply by those we love.
 - a. Is my attachment healthy? Do I make unhealthy choices because of my unhealthy need to be loved by the other?
 - b. Can I say that part of the truth of my hurt is that I have loved and trusted well?

- II. Do I have a healthy sense of detachment (indifference) to the other person? Detachment and indifference sound like negative relational terms. However, a healthy sense of detachment can be thought of as detachment that helps you maintain your own sense of identity or to act in loving ways toward others even when they don’t like it. (This is difficult to assess honestly. It might take you multiple times using this examen to see what is true.) An unhealthy sense of detachment, being too detached or not detached enough, can undermine achieving healthy forgiveness.*
 - a. Am I able to handle disappointment and rejection from the other?
 - b. Am I burying negative emotions like bitterness and harboring secret feelings of revenge?
 - c. Am I able to experience or express appropriate emotions regarding the transgression (sad, hurt, angry)?

- III. How can working toward healthy detachment actually free you to act in more loving ways toward those for whom you care?

- IV. Where is Jesus in this tension between attachment and detachment?

*If it helps to try to get a handle on healthy detachment, think of healthy parenting. A parent that is not detached enough from their children will find it difficult to ever make a decision that makes their children unhappy or uncomfortable or to make decisions that are important for

their (the parent's) own personal well being. On the other hand, a parent who is too detached will likely create a space that inhibits healthy emotional bonding with their children.