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Forgiveness as a Catalyst for Personal Transformation in Mitch Albom's *The Time Keeper*

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Abstract

In *The Time Keeper* by Mitch Albom, forgiveness emerges as a transformative force that liberates individuals from the burdens of regret, guilt, and resentment. Through the interconnected stories of Dor, Sarah, and Victor, Albom illustrates how forgiveness, both of oneself and others, enables emotional healing and personal growth. Dor, the immortal Father Time, learns to forgive his past mistakes and embrace the fleeting nature of human existence. Sarah, a troubled teenager, struggles with self-forgiveness, while Victor, a dying billionaire, seeks redemption for his selfish pursuits. Albom's narrative underscores that forgiveness is essential for transcending temporal suffering and finding peace. Ultimately, *The Time Keeper* suggests that time's true value lies not in its measurement but in the compassion and forgiveness that make life meaningful. This paper situates Albom's fable within psychological, theological, and literary discourses to demonstrate how Dor, Sarah Lemon, and Victor Delamonte undergo radical change when they relinquish resentment, accept grace, and forgive themselves, others, and ultimately time itself.

Keywords: Forgiveness, redemption, time, healing, Mitch Albom, morality.

Forgiveness is a powerful act that involves letting go of negative feelings such as anger, resentment, or the urge for revenge against those who have wronged us. While forgiving does not mean condoning or forgetting the wrongdoing, it is a conscious decision to release the emotional hold that a hurtful event might have on us. This release can lead to significant psychological and physical benefits.

As the Bible instructs, “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3.13). Forgiveness fosters empathy and understanding, allowing individuals to see the humanity in those who have hurt them. It helps break cycles of pain and bitterness, offering the possibility of healing and renewed relationships. Forgiveness is not just for the benefit of the offender; it is also a gift to oneself, as it leads to inner peace and emotional freedom.

The process of forgiveness can be challenging and may require time, self-reflection, and sometimes external support. It involves recognizing one’s pain, accepting the reality of the situation, and making an intentional choice to move forward. Forgiveness is an act of strength, not weakness. It represents a step toward personal growth, resilience, and a more compassionate way of living.

The study employs close textual analysis of primary passages from *The Time Keeper* alongside secondary criticism, psychological analyses, and theological reflections on pardon and self-compassion.

Albom consistently positions forgiveness as an existential pivot. Morrie Schwartz counsels his former student that “holding grudges accomplishes nothing.” In *Tuesdays with Morrie* therefore supplies a moral prelude to *The Time Keeper*, where Albom widens the lens from private reconciliation to cosmic redemption. Earlier texts, such as *The Five People You*

Meet in Heaven also center remorse and atonement, establishing a narrative lineage that climaxes in Dor's mythic journey.

The Time Keeper by Mitch Albom is a fable that explores humanity's relationship with time through the story of Dor, the first person to measure time. As a child, Dor becomes fascinated with counting and later invents the world's first clock. However, his obsession with measuring time angers a divine force, and he is banished to a cave for millennia, forced to listen to humanity's endless pleas for more time. Over the centuries, he becomes Father Time, his soul burdened by the consequences of his invention. Dor regrets for his mistake of measuring time.

Dor is granted a chance of redemption. He is released with a magical hourglass and tasked with teaching two modern individuals the true meaning of time. His task is not to measure time but to teach its meaning: "Find two souls on earth, one who wants too much time and one who wants too little. Teach them what you have learned" (Albom 81). The first is Sarah Lemon, a lonely high school girl who, after a humiliating rejection by the boy whom she is in love with, contemplates suicide. The second is Victor Delamonte, a wealthy, terminally ill businessman obsessed with cheating death through cryonics. Dor intervenes in their lives, using the hourglass to show them visions of their futures: Sarah sees the grief her death would cause her family, while Victor realizes that his frozen body would become a mere spectacle in the future rather than granting him true life.

Through their experiences, both characters learn to forgive themselves and value the time they have, Sarah by choosing to live and Victor by accepting mortality. Dor, having fulfilled his mission, is allowed to return to his dying wife, Alli, in his original time, where they pass away peacefully. The novel concludes with Sarah later finding purpose by curing the disease that claimed Victor's life, symbolizing the cyclical and meaningful nature of time.

Albom's narrative weaves together themes of mortality, regret, and the importance of living in the present. Written in his signature spare yet poignant prose, *The Time Keeper* serves as a meditation on how humanity's fixation on measuring time often distracts from its true value. Mitch Albom's *The Time Keeper* tells the intertwined stories of three individuals: Dor, the first person to measure time, cursed to be Father Time; Sarah Lemon, a teenager contemplating suicide; and Victor Delamonte, a terminally ill businessman seeking to cheat death. Their journeys explore humanity's obsession with time and the consequences of its misuse. Forgiveness emerges as a central theme, highlighting the transformative power of letting go of past regrets and embracing compassion.

Dor's sin is prideful quantification. He invents the first clock to own his existence. He is punished to be in a cave listening to mortal laments for centuries, forces empathy by sensory overload. Albom renders this torment vividly:

He is listening to something. Voices. Endless voices. They rise from a pool in the corner of the cave.

They are the voices of people on Earth.

They want one thing only.

Time. (3)

He must forgive himself for his hubris, and forgive humanity for distorting his invention. Dor's act of halting global time on New Year's Eve stages forgiveness as temporal suspension. His resentment freezes the heart just as paused clocks immobilize the world. When Dor reembraces mortality to die alongside Alli, he embodies the reconciliation theory of atonement, restoring relational harmony through self-sacrifice.

Sarah's storyline dramatizes the adolescent shame. Albom depicts her humiliation with painful realism:

"I just really- I know it's crazy- I just *love* you, you know?" he began rolling his eyes as if he were looking for some friend to say, "Can you believe this?"

She wanted to melt into the ground at that moment, just hot wax into puddle and disappear through a sewer grate. His eyes. That look. No interest. Total humiliation. The minutes of awkward talk from then until he said, "Look Sarah, I gotta go" felt like years. She wanted to explain it better, erase the words. She could wait, she could wait forever. *Just don't ruin it, don't end it!* But when he gave her back the present, still wrapped, and he walked away and dug his hands into his pockets and then half a block down he took out his phone to call... (Albom 150)

She counts down to a humiliating date that triggers suicidal ideation. She felt worthless and hollow. There was no hope of fixing this. And when hope is gone, time is punishment. Albom captures Sarah's descent into despair with stark simplicity: "End it now," she whispered (168-169). Forgiveness begins internally. We need to forgive ourselves. Dor's time-tour therapy exposes the ripple of grief her death would unleash in her mother. Sarah's death breaks down her mother and when she sees her mother crying for her Sarah feels very bad about her decision of committing suicide.

Victor's billions cannot buy immortality; cryonics offers only frozen despair. His transformation hinges on forgiving his aging body and reconciling with his neglected wife. When Dor shows him a future where the resurrection chamber malfunctions, Victor confronts the futility of escaping time. As Albom reminds readers, "With endless time, nothing is special. With no loss or sacrifice, we can't appreciate what we have" (218).

Dor's redemption depends on guiding the one who wants too much time and the other one who wants too little. Sarah and Victor reflect distorted extremes of temporal valuation; forgiving themselves recalibrates their internal chronometers. Their brief emergency-room encounter finalizes mutual transformation: Victor funds Sarah's tuition, symbolically passing reclaimed time to the next generation.

While *The Time Keeper* offers rich allegory, its brevity limits nuanced exploration of systemic forgiveness including social injustice, intergenerational trauma, or racial reconciliation. Future scholarship could apply Albom's framework to communal conflicts, integrating peace building models.

Albom's fable confirms forgiveness is transformative because it reorders our relationship with time, self, and others. Dor's mythic journey proves that mastering minutes without mastering mercy produces exile, but measuring life through compassion restores meaning. By intertwining individual psychology with cosmic narrative, *The Time Keeper* advances a timeless idea, only when we forgive ourselves, and others, we truly begin to live.

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