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Turning to God to Forgive: More than Meets the Eye

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Abstract

Adults ($N = 89$; 59% female) recruited from divorce records reported levels of turning to God to forgive (TGF) themselves, their ex-spouse, and God for their divorce when it occurred (Time 1, T1) and one year later (Time 2, T2). Seventy-five percent of participants reported TGF. T1 TGF predicted higher levels of T2 positive spiritual emotions, T2 verbal aggression by the participant and ex-spouse, and T2 demonization of ex-spouse. Participants were grouped according to pattern of TGF over time (Resolved, Chronic, Delayed, and Low). Repeated measures ANOVAs showed that the Resolved group reported greater declines in demonizing the divorce relative to other groups. Multiple main effects for TGF pattern also emerged. This highlights the need to consider the potentially desirable and undesirable psychosocial and spiritual factors associated with TGF.

Turning to God to Forgive: More than Meets the Eye

Difficult life events in which a person's expectations are seriously violated often elicit negative emotions as well as disparaging images of a harm doer and thoughts or acts of revenge (Williamson & Gonzales, 2007). Successfully transforming such negative responses is central to many conceptualizations of forgiveness (e.g., McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Research suggests that achieving forgiveness improves mental (e.g., Allan, Allan, Kaminer, & Stein, 2006), physical (e.g., Worthington & Scherer, 2003) and interpersonal well-being (e.g., Williamson & Gonzales, 2007), whereas remaining in unforgiveness is linked to stress disorders, mental health disorders, and relationship problems (e.g., Worthington, 2006). Few researchers, however, have conceptualized forgiveness specifically as a coping mechanism or examined expressly spiritually-based efforts to forgive. We extend prior research by focusing on turning to God to forgive (TGF) as a method of coping with a difficult life event – divorce.

The construct of forgiveness has been at the heart of many faith traditions including Christianity (Leach & Lark, 2004; McCullough, Bono, & Root, 2005). Religions provide theological rationales, role models, and support for forgiving (Pargament & Rye, 1998). Religions also provide pathways to achieve forgiveness. Christians, for instance, are encouraged to look to God for help in shifting from anger and bitterness associated with an offense to a position of peace. In this way, forgiveness can function as a religious coping method (Pargament, 1997) in which individuals incorporate God into their efforts to respond not only to discrete transgressions, but to threatening events in general (e.g., divorce; Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000). Research among Christian samples has shown that greater religiousness is tied to a higher value placed on forgiveness (Rye & Pargament, 2002), and experiencing added benefits following forgiveness of more severe offenses (Williamson & Gonzales, 2007). However, little

is known about the prevalence or consequences of pursuing specifically spiritual forgiveness.

Divorce offers a potent context to examine spiritual forgiveness because it violates major religious assumptions many people hold about marriage and often elicits negative thoughts and emotions about the former spouse, self, and God (Mahoney, Krumrei, & Pargament, 2008; Rye, Pargament, Pan, Yingling, Shogren, & Ito, 2005). Further, given the high prevalence of divorce in the U.S., including amongst Christians, it is important to learn whether TGF when divorcing can facilitate post-divorce adjustment over time. Prior research on positive religious coping would suggest that TGF might result in better psychological adjustment (e.g., less depression and distress). In addition, from a Christian perspective, perhaps the most critical functions of forgiveness following divorce are to facilitate an individuals' spirituality (e.g., positive spiritual emotions and spiritual growth; Pargament & Rye, 1998; Rye & Pargament, 2002) and to transform their spiritual understanding of the event in ways that positively impact relationships over time (e.g., less anger and interpersonal hostility; Mahoney et al., 2008).

The first goal of this study was to obtain descriptive information about TGF to cope with divorce. We expected that Christians would engage in TGF to a greater extent than non-religious individuals. The second goal was to examine whether TGF at the time of divorcing (T1) predicted better post-divorce adjustment one year later (T2). Specifically, we expected that higher levels of TGF at T1 would predict increases in psychosocial adjustment (i.e., relative decreases in depression, distress, anger, verbal aggression by self and by ex-spouse), increases in adaptive spiritual functioning (i.e., relative increases in spiritual growth, positive spiritual emotions), and decreases in negative spiritual experiences (i.e., relative decreases in negative spiritual emotions, and demonization). The third goal was to explore whether patterns of TGF over time covaried with changes in divorce-related outcomes. Whereas TGF as a method of

coping when the divorce occurs is expected to be associated with positive outcomes, long-term use of TGF may be associated with a certain degree of distress related both to the event(s) being forgiven and to the difficulty inherent in the act of forgiving. Theoretically, those exhibiting high levels of TGF when divorcing, but low levels one year later, might have experienced more rapid improvement in psychosocial and spiritual functioning than those exhibiting other patterns of TGF. That is, although TGF at the time of divorcing ideally signals adaptive coping, chronically high reliance on TGF may suggest that the coping method is not working or may be a sign of chronically high distress that brings about a continual need for forgiveness. Further, consistently low levels of TGF may be tied to less reduction in distress over time (or lower prevalence of distress), whereas moving from low to high levels of TGF may be correlated with increases in psychosocial and spiritual distress that bring about a delayed need for forgiveness.

Consistent with national norms on divorcees, the study's sample was predominantly Christian, with an additional 18% reporting no religious affiliation and 4% reporting a non-Christian affiliation. Analyses were conducted with the full sample to maximize statistical power. However, given the focus of this special volume, additional information is provided regarding TGF among the Christian subsample.

Method

Participants

Eighty-nine adults (59% female) aged 19 to 64 years ($M = 39.2$, $SD = 10.0$) completed measures within 6 months of filing for divorce (T1) and one year later (T2). Participants were predominantly Christian (51% Protestant, 27% Catholic); 18% endorsed "None" for religion and 4% reported a non-Christian religion. Participants were 87% Caucasian, 5% African American,

5% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 1% “Other.” The divorce was initiated by participants (46%), the ex-spouse (34%), or both together (20%).

Measures

Turning to God to Forgive (TGF). A 9-item scale derived from the religious forgiveness scale of the RCOPE (Pargament et al., 2000) assessed whether participants looked to God for help in forgiving their ex-spouse, themselves, and God in response to their divorce ($\alpha = .94$ at T1 and T2). Items included: “Sought God’s help in trying to forgive [my ex-spouse/myself/God] for the divorce,” “Sought help from God in letting go of my anger at [target] about the divorce,” and “Asked God to help me overcome my bitterness or resentment towards [target] about the divorce.” Items were rated on a four-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 4 = *a great deal*) and summed into a score for TGF at T1. In addition, T1 and T2 TGF scores were used to assign participants to TGF groups.

Depression. Depressive symptoms were assessed with the 20-item Center for Epidemiological Studies - Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). Items were rated on a four-point scale (1 = *rarely or none of the time* to 4 = *most or all of the time*), where appropriate reverse scored, and summed into a depression score at T1 ($\alpha = .93$) and T2 ($\alpha = .91$).

Distress about divorce. The Impact of Events Scale (IES; Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez, 1979) was used to assess subjective distress about the divorce (15 items). The IES assessed intrusive thoughts (e.g., “pictures about it popped into my mind”) and avoidant behaviors (e.g., “I tried not to talk about it”) about the divorce. Items were rated on a four-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 4 = *often*) and summed into a distress score at T1 ($\alpha = .92$) and T2 ($\alpha = .96$).

Anger about divorce. The state subscale of the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (Spielberger, 1991) was used to assess participants’ experience of anger about the divorce (5

items). Items were rated on a five-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*) and summed into an anger score at T1 ($\alpha = .93$) and T2 ($\alpha = .95$).

Verbal aggression. The 7-item verbal aggression subscale of the Conflict Tactics Scale-II (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) was used to assess participants' report of verbal aggression toward and from the ex-spouse. Participants rated both self and ex-spouse. Items were rated on a four-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 4 = *often*) and summed into a score for verbal aggression by self ($\alpha = .82$ at T1 and $\alpha = .89$ at T2), and by ex-spouse ($\alpha = .92$ at T1 and $\alpha = .90$ at T2).

Spiritual growth. Eight items were used to assess spiritual growth since the divorce, including the Short Spiritual Growth Scale (SSGS; Pargament, Ensing, Falgout, Olsen, Reilly, Van Haitsma, et al. (1990). Additional items included statements such as, "I feel a stronger sense of spiritual closeness to others," and "I have experienced a spiritual or religious reawakening." Items were rated on a five-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *a great degree*) and summed into a spiritual growth score at T1 ($\alpha = .96$) and T2 ($\alpha = .96$).

Positive and negative spiritual emotions. A measure of explicitly spiritual emotions (Butter, 2004) was adapted to assess participants' positive and negative spiritual emotions as a result of their divorce (e.g.: "spiritually uplifted or inspired," "intense sense of gratitude toward a higher power," "sense of peace beyond all understanding," "felt fully accepted by God," and "felt spiritually lost or empty," "deep sadness in my soul," "guilt about my spiritual failures," "felt like screaming out in anger at God"). Items were rated on a five-point scale (1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *most of the time*) and summed into a score for positive spiritual emotions (7 items; $\alpha = .91$ at T1 and T2) and negative spiritual emotions (7 items; $\alpha = .84$ at T1 and T2).

Demonization. A demonization scale that assesses the extent to which individuals attribute negative events to demonic forces (Mahoney et al., 2002) was adapted to assess the extent to which participants viewed their divorce as being influenced by the devil (i.e., “the devil played a role in my divorce,” “my divorce reflects what the devil wants”) and the extent to which participants viewed their ex-spouse’s actions as being influenced by the devil (e.g., “the devil used my ex-spouse for his purposes,” “my ex-spouse has given his/her soul to the devil.”). Items were rated on a five-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*), and scores were created for demonization of the divorce (3 items; $\alpha = .97$ at T1 and T2) and demonization of ex-spouse (8 items; $\alpha = .96$ at T1 and $\alpha = .97$ at T2).

Demographic and religious information. Data were gathered about participants’ demographic and religious characteristics, such as age, gender, race, income, and religious affiliation. Additionally, couple demographic data were gathered, including time since filing and finalizing divorce, and whether partners shared children.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from public divorce records. Participants completed measures within 6 months of filing for divorce and one year later. Participants were compensated with \$20 gift cards for each assessment.

Results

Descriptive Information

We provide descriptive information about TGF (see Table 1). Participants’ total scores for TGF ranged from 9 to 36 with a mean of 16.9 ($SD=7.8$) within six months of filing for divorce (T1) and 16.6 ($SD=7.3$) one year later (T2). At T1, 72% of the sample endorsed some degree of TGF; this figure was 75% one year later. Christians engaged in more TGF than those

with no religious affiliation at T1: $F(87) = 13.8, p < .001$, and T2: $F(87) = 8.1, p < .01$. Finally, although subsequent analyses used total TGF scores, we also provide in Table 1 descriptive details about spiritual forgiveness aimed at ex-spouse, self, and God for the total sample and for the two subsamples of Christians and those with no religious affiliation.

Preliminary analyses

Because race was correlated with demonization of ex-spouse ($r = .24, p < .05$), it was controlled in relevant analyses. There was no need to control for other demographic variables. Regarding attrition, eleven participants completed T1 measures without completing T2 measures. These participants were more likely to be male: $\chi^2(1) = 7.12, p < .05$. There were no differences on other assessed variables.

TGF at Time 1 as a Predictor of Post-Divorce Adjustment from Time 1 to Time 2

The second goal of this study was to assess whether TGF at T1 predicted change in post-divorce adjustment from T1 to T2 (see Table 2). Hierarchical regression analyses indicated that higher levels of TGF at T1 predicted higher levels of positive spiritual emotions at T2 after controlling T1 positive spiritual emotions ($\beta = .20, F_{\text{change}} = 4.54, R^2_{\text{change}} = .02, p < .05$). However, contrary to hypotheses, higher levels of TGF at T1 also predicted higher levels of verbal aggression by ex-spouse ($\beta = .22, F_{\text{change}} = 6.02, R^2_{\text{change}} = .05, p < .05$), demonization of ex-spouse ($\beta = .22, F_{\text{change}} = 7.14, R^2_{\text{change}} = .03, p < .01$), and verbal aggression by participant ($\beta = .20, F_{\text{change}} = 5.09, R^2_{\text{change}} = .04, p < .05$), after controlling levels of each outcome at T1. Furthermore, contrary to hypotheses, TGF at T1 did not predict change in other psychosocial or spiritual outcomes.

Similar findings emerged for the Christian subsample. For Christians ($N = 65$), higher levels of TGF at T1 predicted higher levels of positive spiritual emotions ($\beta = .20, F_{\text{change}} = 4.54$,

$R^2_{change} = .02, p < .05$), verbal aggression by ex-spouse ($\beta = .21, F_{change} = 4.28, R^2_{change} = .04, p < .05$), and demonization of ex-spouse ($\beta = .28, F_{change} = 11.63, R^2_{change} = .06, p < .01$) at T2 when controlling scores on these outcome measures at T1. However, among Christians, higher levels of TGF at T1 were not predictive of more verbal aggression by self at T2 when controlling scores on verbal aggression by self at T1 ($\beta = .15, F_{change} = 2.01, R^2_{change} = .02, p > .05$).

Pattern of Change in TGF over Time tied to Post-Divorce Adjustment

The third goal of this study was to explore whether four distinct patterns of TGF over time related to changes in post-divorce adjustment. At both T1 and T2, participants were divided into those who scored above and below the mean in TGF, resulting in four groups. There were 12 TGF-Resolved participants (above TGF sample mean at T1 and below TGF sample mean at T2). There were 29 TGF-Chronic participants (above TGF sample mean at T1 and T2). There were 9 TGF-Delayed participants (below TGF sample mean at T1 and above TGF sample mean at T2). Finally, there were 39 TGF-Low participants (below TGF sample mean at T1 and T2). Despite the nature of the distribution of participants across TGF groups, Mauchly's test of sphericity indicated that sphericity was maintained in each analysis. Nevertheless, we chose a conservative test for all post hoc analyses (Tamhane's T2). Due to group size constraints we did not re-run the following analyses with the Christian subsample. However, the four TGF groups did not differ in their percentage of Christians, $\chi^2(3, N = 89) = 7.22, p > .05$.

TGF group as a Predictor of Post-Divorce Adjustment among the Full Sample (N = 89)

A repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted for each outcome variable from T1 to T2 with TGF group as a between-subjects factor (see Table 3). An interaction effect emerged between TGF group (i.e., pattern of change in spiritual forgiveness) and demonizing the divorce, $F(3, 85) = 3.27, p < .05$, indicating that the rate of change in demonization from T1 to

T2 differed between the TGF groups (Figure 1). The Resolved TGF group exhibited a greater decrease in demonization over time compared to the Delayed and Low TGF groups (Tamhane's $T_2, p < .05$).

In addition, main effects emerged for the TGF groups. With regards to psychosocial adjustment, the TGF groups differed in anger, $F(3, 85) = 7.73, p < .001$. The Chronic TGF group reported more anger than the Resolved and Low TGF groups (Tamhane's $T_2, p < .01$). The TGF groups differed in depression, $F(3, 85) = 3.24, p < .01$. The Chronic TGF group reported more depression than the Low TGF group (Tamhane's $T_2, p < .05$). Finally, the TGF groups differed in distress, $F(3, 85) = 5.56, p < .01$. The Chronic TGF group reported more distress than the Low TGF group (Tamhane's $T_2, p < .01$).

With regards to spiritual adjustment, TGF groups differed in demonization of ex-spouse, $F(3, 85) = 8.80, p < .001$. The Chronic TGF group reported more demonization of ex-spouse than the other three TGF groups (Tamhane's $T_2, p < .05$). Similarly, the TGF groups differed in demonization of divorce, $F(3, 85) = 16.46, p < .001$. The Chronic TGF group reported more demonization of divorce than the other three TGF groups (Tamhane's $T_2, p < .01$). The TGF groups differed in spiritual growth, $F(3, 85) = 16.41, p < .001$. The Chronic TGF group reported more spiritual growth than the Delayed and Low TGF groups and the Resolved TGF group reported more spiritual growth than the Low TGF group (Tamhane's $T_2, p < .01$). The TGF groups differed in positive spiritual emotions, $F(3, 85) = 16.12, p < .001$. The Chronic TGF group reported more positive spiritual emotions than the Delayed and Low TGF groups and the Resolved TGF group reported more positive spiritual emotions than the Low TGF group (Tamhane's $T_2, p < .01$). Finally, the TGF groups differed in negative spiritual emotions, $F(3,$

85) = 5.18, $p < .01$. The Chronic TGF group reported more negative spiritual emotions than the Low TGF group (Tamhane's T_2 , $p < .01$).

Main effects also emerged due to time. Participants reported higher levels of anger, depression, distress, and demonization of divorce at T1 in comparison to T2 ($p < .05$).

Discussion

This longitudinal study of 89 adults examines turning to God to forgive (TGF) as a means of coping with divorce, a difficult yet common family crisis. The surprising results highlight the complexity of TGF and the need to consider the potentially desirable and undesirable factors associated with TGF. Our discussion applies to the full sample and Christian subsample, which produced nearly identical results.

This study revealed that it was not uncommon for a community sample of divorcees to rely on God to overcome feelings of anger, bitterness, and resentment towards their ex-spouse, themselves, and God in response to divorce. Three-quarters of the sample reported engaging in TGF to some degree, with 40% reporting moderate to high levels. Not surprisingly, those with a Christian affiliation reported greater TGF than those who did not endorse a religious affiliation.

Contrary to expectations, higher levels of TGF at the time of divorce generally did not predict better psychosocial or spiritual outcomes one year later. The exception was that those who engaged in higher TGF when divorcing reported more positive spiritual emotions one year later, after controlling for the initial level of such emotions. That is, those who engaged in higher TGF experienced an increase in feeling accepted by God, spiritually uplifted or inspired, an intense sense of gratitude toward a higher power, a sense of peace beyond understanding, etc. This finding is consistent with research indicating that positive religious coping is tied to greater spiritual well-being (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). However, TGF did not translate into relatively

less depression, distress, or anger tied to the divorce over time, after controlling for initial levels of such psychological difficulties. Moreover, higher levels of TGF at the time of the divorce predicted increases over time in the participant's and his/her ex-spouse's use of verbal aggression with each other as well as greater perceptions that the ex-spouse had acted under the influence of demonic forces.

These findings are quite novel and merit speculation about their underlying dynamics. The finding that engaging more in TGF when divorcing was associated with an increase in the ex-spouse's verbal aggression over time may be consistent with the popular social perception that forgiving a transgressor provides him or her with license to continue in wrongdoing. Thus, this finding raises the tentative yet provocative question whether engaging in spiritual forgiveness places individuals in a vulnerable position for experiencing continued and increased transgressions from the ex-spouse.

A perhaps more difficult question to grapple with is why engaging in TGF when divorcing relates to an increase in verbal hostility by the participant toward the ex-spouse a year later. This finding was significant for the full sample ($N = 89$), but not the Christian subsample ($N = 65$), which may reflect a lack of power (null findings also emerged for the non-Christians, $N = 24$). TGF may represent a form of spiritual triangulation wherein the individual feels closely aligned with God but conveys an attitude of spiritual superiority toward the ex-spouse. Butler and Harper (1994) have described how God can be drawn into coalitions that contribute to conflict among couples. If TGF involves taking a "spiritually one-up" position, this may polarize the ex-partners over time. This process may contribute to the increase in demonizing the ex-spouse and lead the individual who is engaged in TGF to feel unjustly injured by the ex-spouse and/or more justified to engage in verbal self-defense or retaliation (Mahoney & Tarakeshwar, 2005).

Further support for such dynamics is that people who shifted from high to low levels of TGF over time exhibited a greater decrease in viewing the divorce as the work of the devil, compared to individuals who moved from low to high levels of TGF or were consistently low in TGF. This implies that higher TGF may fuel negative spiritual attributions about the divorce that can contribute to verbal hostility towards the ex-spouse. However, an important consideration is that reconciliation of the former spouses is not a goal in the context of divorce. Thus, TGF may function differently when divine help is sought to forgive a spouse in hopes of remaining married.

Another key set of findings is that patterns of TGF over time appear to reflect the level of psychological suffering experienced by the individual. Specifically, the Chronic TGF group (i.e., high in TGF at both time points) reported higher overall levels of anger, depression, and distress than the Low TGF group and higher overall levels of anger than the Resolved TGF group. Thus, those who experience the greatest amount negative thoughts and feelings about the divorce because of personality, situational, or other factors, may find themselves persistently seeking God's help to forgive. The current study assessed only the use, not success, of such efforts to reach forgiveness. Therefore, the Chronic TGF group may have continued relying on God for help because they had trouble achieving forgiveness, perhaps due to individual factors or because they experienced relatively more painful and relentless divorce-related stressors.

The picture is a bit more complex for spiritual outcomes. The Chronic TGF group on average reported more demonic appraisals, more negative and positive spiritual emotions, and greater spiritual growth than one or more of the other TGF groups. Thus, while TGF is linked to greater psychological and spiritual struggles, it also covaries with spiritual enrichment. This observation dovetails with the finding that those who shifted from high to low levels of TGF (i.e., Resolved)

on average experienced more positive spiritual emotions and spiritual growth than those who were low in TGF at both time points. Thus, seeking God's help in forgiving in response to divorce may reflect an opportunity for spiritual growth and healing.

Taken together, this study offers an intriguing glimpse into the potential benefits and risks associated with seeking God's help to recover from a divorce. Although individuals who to a greater extent turn to God to try to forgive report improvements in their spiritual lives over time, they also report more conflictual post-divorce relationships with their ex-spouses over time. This suggests that individuals who align with God to heal from a broken marital relationship may benefit from sensitive pastoral or psychological counseling to facilitate their efforts to forgive ex-spouse, themselves, and God. Such work might explore fully the ways in which individuals relate to God, their expectations for God, their spiritual and psychological strivings, and the ways they are attempting to achieve these goals.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Turning to God to Forgive (TGF) Scales and Responses of Total Sample (N = 89), Christians' (N = 65), and Religiously Non-affiliated (N = 19)

Scale (# items)	α	Range	Sample Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Average response: “Not at all”		Average response: “A little”		Average response: “Moderately to A lot”			
Time 1											
Total TGF (9)	.94	9 - 36	16.88 (7.79)	28%		29%		43%			
TGF Ex (3)	.93	3 - 12	6.54 (3.34)	33%		11%		56%			
TGF Self (3)	.93	3 - 12	6.06 (3.06)	37%		14%		49%			
TGF God (3)	.91	3 - 12	4.28 (2.39)	69%		4%		27%			
Time 2											
Total TGF (9)	.94	9 - 36	16.55 (7.33)	25%		35%		40%			
TGF Ex (3)	.94	3 - 12	6.20 (3.14)	34%		13%		53%			
TGF Self (3)	.87	3 - 12	6.01 (2.77)	29%		17%		54%			
TGF God (3)	.92	3 - 12	4.34 (2.32)	63%		12%		25%			
Scale	Mean (<i>SD</i>)					“Not at all”		“A little”		“Moderately to A lot”	
	Christian Non-affiliated		<i>F</i>	Christian Non-affiliated		Christian Non-affiliated		Christian Non-affiliated			
Time 1											
Total TGF	18.62 (7.88) 12.17 (5.23)		13.77***	15% 63%		38% 25%		47% 12%			
TGF Ex	7.34 (3.34) 4.38 (2.22)		16.21***	22% 63%		24% 25%		59% 12%			
TGF Self	6.69 (3.05) 4.33 (2.39)		11.67**	25% 71%		23% 12%		52% 17%			
TGF God	4.58 (2.66) 3.46 (1.06)		4.03*	63% 83%		19% 17%		18% 0%			
Time 2											
Total TGF	17.85 (7.10) 13.04 (6.91)		8.14**	12% 58%		47% 30%		41% 12%			
TGF Ex	6.82 (3.10) 4.54 (2.65)		10.14**	23% 63%		29% 25%		48% 12%			
TGF Self	6.52 (2.65) 4.63 (2.67)		8.98**	17% 63%		37% 25%		46% 12%			
TGF God	4.51 (2.39) 3.88 (2.07)		1.31	57% 79%		28% 17%		15% 4%			

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Turning to God to Forgive (TGF) at Time 1 (T1) Predicting Scores on Outcome Measures at Time 2 (T2) above Scores on Outcome Measures at T1 (N = 89)

	T2 Positive Spiritual Emotions					T2 Verbal Aggression by Ex-Spouse				
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R² Change</i>	<i>F for R² Change</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R² Change</i>	<i>F for R² Change</i>
Step 1 Race T1 Outcome Measure	.74	.08	.73***	.53	95.07***	.54	.09	.55***	.31	38.12***
Step 2 T1 TGF	.20	.10	.20*	.02	4.54*	.17	.05	.22*	.05	6.02*
	T2 Demonization of Ex-Spouse					T2 Verbal Aggression by Self				
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R² Change</i>	<i>F for R² Change</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R² Change</i>	<i>F for R² Change</i>
Step 1 Race T1 Outcome Measure	1.15 .66	.75 .07	.11 .73***	.57	112.86***	.61	.09	.58***	.34	43.95***
Step 2 T1 TGF	.24	.09	.22**	.03	7.14**	.08	.04	.20*	.04	5.09*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3

Repeated-Measures ANOVA Results for Turning to God to Forgive (TGF) Groups

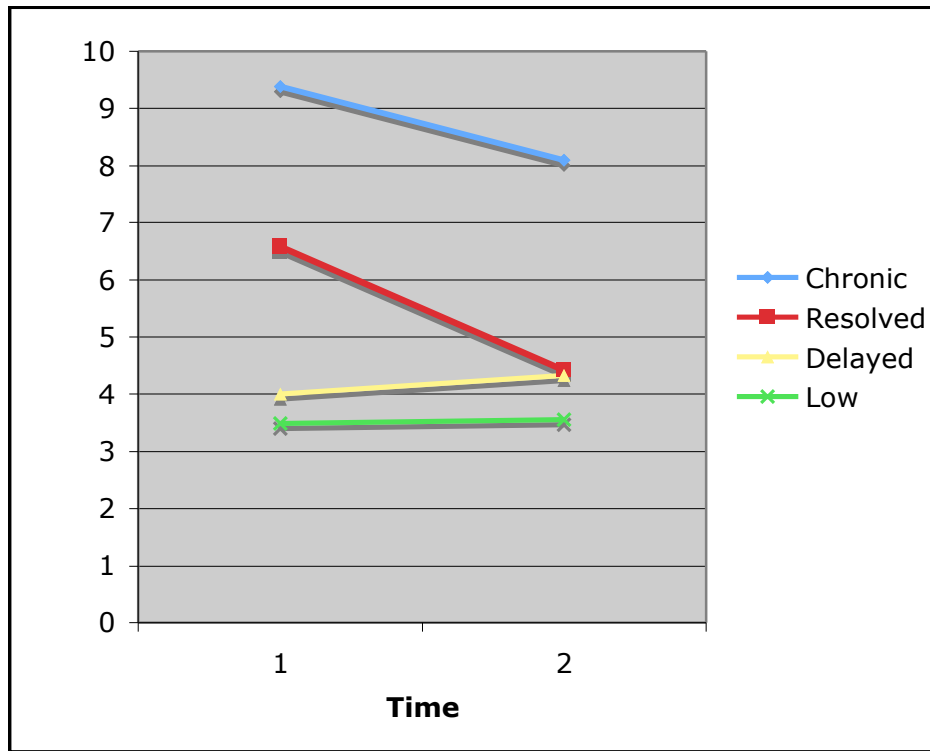
	Chronic (N = 29)		Resolved (N = 12)		Delayed (N = 9)		Low (N = 39)		Time x Condition F Value
Variable	Time 1 M (SD)	Time 2 M (SD)	Time 1 M (SD)	Time 2 M (SD)	Time 1 M (SD)	Time 2 M (SD)	Time 1 M (SD)	Time 2 M (SD)	
Anger	15.83 (3.48)	11.90 (4.49) ^a	11.92 (3.75)	7.83 (3.56) ^b	13.89 (5.67)	10.67 (5.61) ^{ab}	11.29 (4.72)	7.79 (4.17) ^b	.14
Depression	47.38 (13.16)	38.66 (11.66) ^a	41.50 (11.12)	28.08 (7.30) ^{ab}	38.26 (13.19)	38.33 (5.66) ^{ab}	38.26 (13.19)	34.21 (11.38) ^b	2.22
Distress	37.93 (9.40)	29.07 (13.30) ^a	30.67 (9.37)	22.42 (8.59) ^{ab}	36.00 (11.21)	32.22 (10.87) ^{ab}	32.48 (10.44)	22.15 (10.42) ^b	.94
Demonization of Ex	20.86 (10.28)	18.31 (10.32) ^a	11.00 (5.54)	10.67 (4.23) ^b	11.67 (7.61)	12.56 (8.76) ^b	11.32 (7.58)	10.26 (6.01) ^b	.84
Demonization of divorce	9.38 (4.59)	8.10 (4.29) ^a	6.58 (4.70)	4.42 (2.50) ^b	4.00 (3.00)	4.33 (4.00) ^b	3.49 (2.00)	3.56 (2.04) ^b	3.27*
Spiritual growth	31.21 (10.10)	31.10 (11.29) ^a	28.08 (11.94)	22.67 (13.53) ^{ab}	18.11 (7.36)	21.78 (7.01) ^{bd}	15.69 (8.59)	15.77 (9.20) ^{cd}	2.49
Positive Spiritual Emotions	24.03 (5.76)	24.03 (6.49) ^a	22.00 (8.31)	20.00 (8.73) ^{a c}	12.89 (4.73)	16.89 (5.90) ^{cb}	14.71 (6.61)	14.11 (6.54) ^b	2.05
Negative Spiritual Emotions	15.86 (5.21)	15.41 (4.95) ^a	14.25 (5.40)	11.42 (6.97) ^{ab}	13.00 (5.43)	13.89 (4.14) ^{ab}	11.15 (6.69)	10.56 (4.68) ^b	1.10
Verbal aggression by Ex-spouse	10.45 (4.67)	10.34 (4.20)	7.83 (3.69)	9.08 (4.81)	9.56 (4.95)	8.67 (3.87)	9.32 (4.09)	8.18 (3.94)	1.19
Verbal aggression by self	8.00 (3.14)	8.17 (3.59)	6.92 (2.84)	6.58 (3.15)	8.11 (4.08)	7.11 (2.15)	6.92 (2.84)	6.13 (3.03)	.73

Note. Mauchly's test of sphericity revealed that, in all cases, sphericity was maintained. TGF groups that do not share superscripts differed at the $p < .05$ level.

* $p < .05$

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Demonization of divorce by TGF group.



Note. The Resolved TGF group differed from the Delayed TGF group and the Low TGF group ($p < .05$)

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