From the perspective of the offender and the victim, the many variables are exposed (attitudes, desires, and actions) that encourage an authentic experience of forgiveness: the type of offense and its severity, the intensity of the damage caused, or the type of relationship that exists between the victim and the offender. Among the different attitudes and behaviors that the aggressor may reveal, the importance and transcendence are emphasized of the sincere and honest process of “apologizing” (51-54), which must show signs pointing towards the authentic reconstruction of the relationship. Saying sorry generates, in the victims, empathy and inclination to forgive. But there are more variables. This chapter also discusses how conflict is experienced based on gender: do men and women live and feel the same in a process of forgiveness? What feelings are more prevalent in men and in women? (56). Empathy and its relation to forgiveness, rumination and the influence of spirituality and religiosity (especially what is the underlying image of God?) These are three key concepts that María Prieto studies with a briefness and depth in order to better understand the process of forgiveness and reconciliation.

The short Chapter 4 (65-72) presents two recent models of intervention to facilitate forgiveness: Worthington (2006), and Enrich and Fitzgibbons (2000). Prieto summarizes clearly and pedagogically the various phases that these authors propose in order to carry out an adequate process of forgiveness with so many variables on the table. The model of psychoeducation of the former is included in the acronym REACH, which covers the five phases of the process: Recall, Empathize, Altruistic Gift, Commitment and Hold on.

One of the most interesting chapters in my view (73-86) is the one that links forgiveness with positive effects in the human organism, at the physical, mental, and spiritual levels: forgiveness improves the cardiovascular response, tension, blood pressure... forgiveness is literally a “change of heart” (74). Forgiveness improves muscular tension (corrugator muscle), the immune system, sleep, and it also reduces fatigue. Its positive psychological consequences are the reduction of stress and the reduction of anxiety about life and death. On the contrary, the lack of forgiveness can increase anxiety, bitterness, hostility and the tendency to depression in men and women.

And what can be said about “forgiveness of oneself”? (87-97) Is it possible? Is it recommended at all times and in all circumstances? Does it involve any risks? It is a concept as yet little studied and from which it has been discovered that it also has its “dark side”, and risks that can associate it with “false forgiveness”. The sample that is offered in 93-97 on the process of forgiveness of oneself in four phases seems to me an enormously lucid guide to embarking on this path of “self-forgiveness” with assurances: remorse, responsibility, restoration and self-acceptance.

The book advances from question to question, to which Chapter 7 (99-120) provides answers; it serves to demonstrate the scientific character of the research on forgiveness: “is it possible to measure forgiveness”? In little more than 20 compact and rigorous pages, María Prieto presents no less than 40 measurement instruments of forgiveness: specific forgiveness, dispositional forgiveness, Forgiveness of oneself or in the family and within the couple. For the author, it is essential to continue studying these forms of assessment “in order to have a solid, valid body of knowledge, on which to base the psychological work on forgiveness” (120).
But any conflict or offense that can trigger a process of forgiveness occurs in a context. This is the object of study of Chapter 8 (121-135). It is surprising to discover the absence of training for forgiveness in the educational field; it has been studied slightly more within forgiveness and resolution of conflicts in the workplace (124-125). The most studied context, undoubtedly, is that of the family and the couple that María Prieto illustrates with the itinerary presented in six steps (129-130), following the proposal of Worthington and Drinkard (2000). The summary provided by the author seems very lucid and enormously practical.

For those not initiated in this topic, this book is a discovery of the surprising backdrop that underlies the concept—the experience of forgiveness. María Prieto has masterfully combined clear and direct language with a rigorous and scientific methodology. Her academic exposition is integrated into a clear pedagogy that leads the reader from the presentation of the chapter to the invaluable summary that closes it. The 17 pages of bibliographical references (137-155), as well as the 16 final annexes, give a solid foundation to the assertions of the author, who does not take a step in her argument without explaining where the data or the statement she offers has come from.

A warning for navigators: almost all the references used in the research are works in English. This fact also makes us think about the (urgent?) need to continue to promote this research in the Spanish-speaking scientific field.

Maria Prieto closes her Introduction with these words: “... these years that I have been studying forgiveness, have been a privileged way of learning about the greatness of which the human being is capable” (18). With this book, the author has opened a window to allow us to participate in this breathtaking landscape.