



Fold Here

FORGIVENESS

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

-Mahatma Gandhi

"The practice of forgiveness is the most important contribution to the healing of the world."

-Marianne Williamson

Fold Here

What do the following things have in common?

The Holocaust
Virginia Tech
People with children who divorce
Drunk drivers
9/11

Talk about these events for a while. Consider how much pain has been caused. Put yourself in these situations. How can the victims of these events find freedom from the pain?

Fold Here

The Beginning of the story....from Corrie ten Boom's "The Hiding Place"

Corrie ten Boom lived in the Netherlands during the Nazi invasion. Her home became a place of refuge, in God's name, for Jews trying to escape Nazi persecution. When a fellow Dutchman turned her over to the Nazis, Corrie, her father, and her sister were sent to a concentration camp. Ten days after their arrival, Corrie's father died. She and her sister were moved two more times, each camp worse than the last. Finally, her beloved sister died. Corrie was finally released by an error in her paperwork, just days before her age group was annihilated.

Years later, Corrie was delivering a sermon on forgiveness at a church in Munich. In the crowd, she spied one of the guards who had been her and her sister's tormentors. One glimpse of his uniform hurled her back in time, and she saw her sister's emaciated frame again, the ribs nearly poking through the skin.

This man approached Corrie and said, "You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk. I was a guard there. But since that time," he went on, "I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fraulein, ..." his hand came out, ... "will you forgive me?"

What would you do? What would you say to him? What reason did Corrie have to forgive this man?

"Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back—in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you."

— Frederick Buechner

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Share a story from your life when you have been forgiven much.

How does forgiveness relate with love in your life?

The end of the story...

So what did Corrie do? She couldn't do it. She couldn't take the prison guard's hand and grant him forgiveness for what he'd done to her, her sister, and countless others. But then she realized she had to....because she herself had received God's forgiveness, and because Jesus made our forgiveness available on one condition—that we forgive others.

"Forgiveness is an act of the will," she said, "and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart." So she made the decision to forgive the man and let her emotions catch up later. And they did.

Forgiveness is a choice.

What has happened when you've stayed mad at someone instead of forgiving them?

Is it always possible to forgive someone who's hurt you?

Were you forgiven? Did you forgive?

Who was the last person you hurt?

How did you deal with that situation?

Who was the last person that hurt you?

What does it mean to forgive?



CHECK OUT THESE SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 18:21-35

Psalms 130:1-5

Colossians 3:13-14

What do these scriptures tell us about forgiveness?

Write the situations in your life in which you need to forgive someone.

Write the situations in which you need to be forgiven.

REFILL: THOUGHT OF THE DAY

Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to forgive ourselves for the many things we tend to screw up. The shame and guilt from our sin turns prayer into a broken record of asking forgiveness for the same sin.

Remember this: God forgave you the first time you asked. When you ask again, He doesn't even remember what you're talking about.

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." - Psalm 103:12