

Forgiving till it hurts

A trusted friend discloses a painful secret you told them in confidence and shares it with someone else.

Your fiancée is ready to take off the day after the engagement party and brags about this on the night with his best mates but none of them let you know.

An old hurt keeps resurfacing and holding you back in your life.

You sit with considerable pain from multiple hurts such that you can almost write “30 pieces of silver” over your life.

You recently heard about the power of forgiveness but you’re wondering how this thing works.

Jesus’ most famous parable on this subject (Matthew 18) is set around a story that is common to all times and cultures. It is a story built around debt. Everyone has known what it is to be in someone’s debt.

If someone were to forgive you a debt, they literally cancel the debt, or erase it completely. It is no more. The board is wiped clean. It is implicit in the word. They have offered you *a gift*.

In marriage it is a wise idea to pepper our conversation with the language of forgiveness. We may have just been wronged but at any given point in time, we’re moments away from our own mistake. This is daily life. Let grace reign!

What when the hurt runs so deep that the hurt dominates our thoughts? Meanwhile the offender has an easy night’s sleep. We become as it were imprisoned in a prison of our own making and soon realise the cost of unforgiveness is higher than we can afford to pay.

Hillary Clinton, wife of former President Bill Clinton, suffered enormous pain and worldwide shame as a result of her husband’s infidelity. Listen to her words on interview with BBC 4 radio, broadcast in July 2004: “Forgiveness is a choice. I fully respect those who don’t make that...but for me it was absolutely the right choice. It is something that is incredibly difficult but I am grateful everyday that’s the choice I made...It’s not by accident the great religions, the great writers talk about how the person who forgives is liberated, maybe even more than the person who is forgiven.”

It is possible. The most heinous crime of humanity took place two thousand years ago, when those who put Jesus to death committed the act of *Deicide*. Jesus responded from the cross, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23.34). His act of forgiveness paved the only way forward. It gave rise to Peter’s sermon 50 days after His death and resurrection. The early church was born (Acts 2). Jesus’ followers could now find joy in reconciliation with God and invitation to a life of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit will lead us in the path of love and equip us with power to forgive the deepest hurt. For many it will be a process of time coupled with pastoral care and professional support along the way. But the choice has already been taken when we have begun the path and the power is there to enable us in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Let grace reign!