

POTATOES/FORGIVENESS

By: Lee De Groot

STORY:

I was sitting in Algebra I class in my usual seat in the far back corner. I didn't want to stick out. I didn't want to be noticed. I just wanted to blend in with the paneled wall behind me. But once again the teacher asked me to do the next problem on the board. "Why me? Why did he always call on me? He knows by now that I do not get Algebra? Right? Why can't he just leave me alone!" As quickly as I could feel all eyes shifting in my direction I could also feel my cheeks turn red as the heat started radiating off of my face. I looked at my notebook trying to find the solution to this problem in my homework assignment from the night before. But once again my notebook was full of numbers but no answers. Taking my time, I got up out of my desk and walked to the board. I did not want to look dumb in front of my peers, so instead, I tried to look like I really did not care. After scratching out a bunch of numbers on the board and knowing I had not achieved a thing I went back to my desk. Defeated on the inside, I continued to put on the front of not giving a crap. The teacher's comments still continue to ring in my ears..."You will amount to nothing with that kind of attitude. When are you going to start trying?" I convinced myself that this teacher just had it in for me. I hated him because he purposely tried to make me look like a fool in front of my classmates. I kept thinking to myself..."If he only knew how hard I was trying. He'd leave me alone."

ACTIVITY: (paper and pens)

Think about all the wrongs that others have done to you. Write them down.

- *Has someone said something to you that hurt?
- *Has someone spread vicious rumors about you?
- *Have you been put on the spot only to be completely embarrassed?
- *Have you been cheated on?
- *Have you been be-little?
- *Have you been over looked?
- *Have you not been given credit for something you've worked so hard for?
- *Have you been lied to?
- *Have you been mistreated?
- *Have you been stabbed in the back?
- *Have you trusted someone only to have them turn on you?
- *Have you been the brunt of a joke?
- *Have you been poked fun of?
- *Have you been sexual violated?
- *Have you been physical hurt?
- *Have you been emotionally hurt?
- *Have you been psychologically hurt?
- *Have you been spiritually hurt?
- *Have you been bullied?

- *Did someone rat out on you?
- *Have you gone unnoticed by family members and class mates?
- *Do you feel invisible to those who are supposed to love you?

In how many of these situations are you holding a grudge against the person involved? How many of these individuals have you not forgiven?

RESULTS OF NOT FORGIVING:

Bitterness hurt
 Resentment inner conflicts
 Anger robbed on real joy
 Slavery bondage
 Hatred

TRUE FORGIVENESS:

1. How do you forgive when you don't feel like it? How do you translate the decision to forgive into a change of heart?

*You forgive by faith, out of obedience. Since forgiveness goes against our nature, you must forgive by faith, whether you feel like it or not. You must trust God to do the work in you that needs to be done so that the forgiveness will be complete.

*God honors your commitment to obey Him and your desire to please Him when you choose to forgive. He completes the work in His time. You must continue to forgive (your job), by faith, until the work of forgiveness (the Lord's job), is done in your heart.

Philippians 1:6

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

2. How do you know if you have truly forgiven?

*You will know true forgiveness when you experience the freedom that comes as a result. You are the one who suffers most when you choose not to forgive. When you do forgive, the Lord sets your heart free from the anger, bitterness, resentment and hurt that imprisoned you.

*Forgiving can be a slow process, especially if the wound is deep.

*Forgiving is a choice; a decision you make.

Corrie Ten Boom, a Christian woman who survived a Nazi concentration camp during the Holocaust, said, "Forgiveness is to set a prisoner free, and to realize the prisoner was you."

What if the person who hurt you never asks for forgiveness?

How do you forgive in situations that it is not safe to confront the individual?

How do I forgive when I am not able to confront the individual that has wronged me?

In these situations, forgiveness is between you and God.

If you need to forgive from a distance...that is ok.

RESULTS OF FORGIVING:

Personal growth
Wholeness
Joy
Inner peace
FREEDOM!!

OPTIONAL READING:

FORGIVE AND FORGET? innerfreedomretreat.com/forgiving

“Often we have said, “I can forgive but I cannot forget” and again we are told if you have forgiven, you should forget. Forgetting is not an essential thing for complete forgiving. Let us keep this in mind. We can go on remembering a person's hurt just because we remember it does not mean that we have not forgiven. The sign of forgiving is this to be kept in mind- “when I remember am I disturbed” Even in the slightest way? If I am disturbed in the slightest way then my forgiving is not complete. My feelings are troubling me. But if I remember nothing happens to me, I am completely free, I can remember all the details, nothing disturbs me nor makes me feel taking revenge, absolutely cool and calm, my heart is full of compassion for that person who hurt me deeply - that is the sign I have forgiven, not necessarily forgetting. That is a very very wrong idea that if I have forgiven completely I must forget, not necessarily. Some of us have very beautiful, very powerful memory and when we see those persons we remember but if we do not create even unconsciously some ill feeling within us that is a sign, that we are free persons. Let us keep this in mind.”

STORY CONCLUSION:

It was the end of the semester and I knew my Algebra grade was suffering big time. I had to hand in my homework notebook to be graded. I was in trouble! I had a lot of assignments started but with most of the problems I still did not have a solution. Page after page of numbers that looked like a foreign language to me. I handed it in knowing full well that I would soon be ineligible to run at the district track meet or to be in the final concerts of the year. Days later, I received my notebook back from the teacher I knew was purposely trying to embarrass me. As I opened the notebook, I turned from page to page and noticed he had filled in the problems with the right way of figuring them out and each problem had a solution; an answer. On the back page of my notebook was a note in red ink... “I wish I would have seen all this work sooner. I had no idea. I'm sorry! I did not know! Mr R”
I received a “C” in the class for all my work and effort. In the corners of my own heart I forgave him and when we see each other we are able to talk about old times.

FAMOUS FORGIVENESS QUOTES:

***I had the choice to either grow up and find God in the situation or become bitter. I chose to find God. And I experienced freedom like I never knew before.**

Heather Mercer - Christian Aid Worker who was imprisoned in Afghanistan, 2001.

***Forgiveness doesn't make the other person right, it makes you free.**

Stormie Omartian

***Forgiveness brings freedom - freedom from being controlled by the past, freedom from the emotional ties to the offender, freedom from the continual inner conflicts of bitterness and**

hate, freedom to become whole and enjoy the fullness of life.

Jeanette Vought

ACTIVITY: (Large bag of potatoes, ink pens and plastic grocery bag for each student.)

Have each student think about the things that others have done to them. How many people have wronged them? How many wrongs have these people done? How many have they forgiven? How many have they not forgiven?

Now put a large bag of potatoes on the table in the middle of the room. For each wrong that has not been forgiven have that student take a potato and write the name of the person. When the students are done writing have them put the potatoes in a plastic grocery bag.



READ:

Are Your Potatoes Heavy?

A teacher once told each of her students to bring a clear plastic bag and a sack of potatoes to school. For every person they refuse to forgive in their life's experience, they chose a potato, wrote on it the name and date, and put it in the plastic bag. Some of their bags were quite heavy.

They were then told to carry this bag with them everywhere for one week, putting it beside their bed at night, on the car seat when driving, next to their desk at school.

The hassle of lugging this around with them made it clear what a weight they were carrying spiritually, and how they had to pay attention to it all the time to not forget and keep leaving it in embarrassing places. Naturally, the condition of the potatoes deteriorated to a nasty smelly slime. This was a great metaphor for the price we pay for keeping our pain and heavy negativity. Too often we think of forgiveness as a gift to the other person, and it clearly is for ourselves!

WATCH THE VIDEO:

You tube Chris August 7X70

OPTIONAL: Chris August's Story

Matthew 18:21-22

"Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

7x70 was the last song I wrote for my album. We were 2 days away from tracking when my producer, Ed Cash told me he felt I still needed a personal song for my record. Unaware of my family background, he asked me to go home that night and write about what hurt me as I was growing up. I wrote the first verse of 7x70 later that evening.

After playing my idea for him the following morning, he looked over to me with tears in his eyes and said, "This song has to be on your record and it has to be about forgiveness." This was the last thing I wanted to hear and have to go through while making my album, but nonetheless it

was something that needed to happen.

The following few days consisted of us being surrounded by the Holy Spirit like I've never felt before. This was, without a doubt, the most personal song I had ever taken on and required a mind set on prayer. I come from a broken home. Better yet, a broken family. Parents screaming at each other. Frustrations were commonly taken out on my brother, my sister and me. As the lyrics started to come to mind, so did all the memories of my past that I hadn't thought about in years. Some lines bringing smiles and some bringing another set of pains that I needed to forgive.

Jesus was asked how many times we should forgive our brother. His answer was seventy times seven. God has called us to forgive. It's one of the most difficult things I've had to do, but it was also one of the most freeing things. With forgiveness comes healing. Satan uses the bitterness that we build up in our hearts. For years I told myself that what happened when I was younger didn't affect me. It wasn't until Ed Cash made me relive those memories and told me I need to forgive them. I encourage you to do the same.

My story is not unique. Everywhere I have been I run into people with similar heartache, struggle, and a deep need for forgiveness in their life. My hope is that my story will open a door for you to understand the value and necessity of true forgiveness. As I am still learning, forgiveness is not a one and done type of mindset, but rather a daily, sometimes hourly effort not up to seven times, but seventy times seven."

Chris August

PRAYER:

Lord, I am so undeserving of forgiveness and yet You continue to forgive me time and time again. Thank You for being a loving and forgiving Father. Lord, we all have things in our lives that have hurt us. Sometimes these things are huge and overwhelming and other times they are small things that just nag at us. Lord help us to set our bag of slimy potatoes down. Help us each to give these hurts over to You and to forgive those who have hurt us. Lord help us to forgive 7X70. Thank You Lord for the freedom we gain from true forgiveness! In Jesus' name. AMEN!