



The Sharon Star

Spirit of Christ

By Gilbert James

Well I want to take the opportunity this morning to bring you greetings from the warm, sun-shiny Caribbean.

It's a joy to be here with you and I bring you greetings from all of the churches there in the Caribbean. We appreciate your prayers on our behalf. We are very conscious of the body of Christ that God has been establishing upon the earth. We know that though we may feel sometimes we are separated from one another in terms of distances and sometimes, depending on our capabilities, we may not be able to fellowship with one another, we must constantly be aware of that truth that God has revealed to us. It's not a theory; it's a reality. It does not depend on man's doing; this is what the Lord has done. And what the Lord has done, whether we think of it one way or the other does not change the truth, which is a fact and that is we are members of one body. The body of Christ is a reality. The flow that unites the body of Christ is the Spirit of Christ within one another. We are all connected one with another. I encourage the saints time and time again. I say to them, when you go into prayer, you focus not on just your little group, whether it be your own family or your own church group. But be conscious of the truth that you are connected to a body. It's a wider picture; it's a greater reality and somehow you can reach out to the rest of the body of Christ and minister by the Holy Spirit. You know, I know to those

who don't understand where we are coming from, it may sound like fanaticism. But we know, and the Spirit of God has confirmed it, that the Body of Christ is real. And as read from Psalm 133 this morning, it is because of the unity in the Body of Christ that the Lord has commanded the blessing. Amen? And the blessing that He has commanded, whether I don't like you or you don't like me and we may wish each other bad, that does not change the command of the blessings of God upon those who would rest and abide in the body of Christ. In fact, the very term Christ, as we are told by Paul, is that Christ is a many membered body. And it is that glorious high priesthood revealed there in Aaron, that David saw and wrote about in Psalm 133. It's that same priesthood we are seeing today, revealed in the Christ, who is the many membered body. So let us be assured brethren that we are not alone in this thing and God is moving by His Holy Spirit throughout the church which is the Body of Christ.

I was just reading from the book of John, from John chapter 5. And there is that thought I went over again that has been such a blessing to me. We'll read from John chapter 5: "After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralysed,

waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, 'Do you want to be (healed? Or) do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered Him, 'Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.' Jesus said to him, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk.' And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath" (John 5:1-9).

The book of John, of course like all the gospels or the writing of the scriptures, is very spiritual. John seems to take us on that plane, above the realm of the natural, the normal, the formal, and always takes us into that unusual thing. For example, John chapter one, where John writes: He came to his own, and his own received him not. (John 1:11) (In other words, what you were expecting was not fulfilled.) But as many as received Him, to them he gave the power to become offsprings of the living God. Who were born not of the flesh, not of man, nor of the will of man, but were born of God. (John 1:12-13) John is moving from the

people of God as being Jews, from the Judaism religion, and is introducing a new concept of God's people - people being made offsprings of God. You and I cannot speak this kind of terminology in this world. Neither could John then just do that naturally; to think of people, who are not Jews, who do not have these sacrificial rituals and all of these things that distinguish them from the pagans and heathens of the world, who just by receiving Jesus Christ, receive a power which brings them into a new birth to become God's offspring. They were brought forth as offsprings of God. God has offsprings. We can try to think it through in the natural, but we have been called to walk at the level of the word of God. They were born of God and no kind of mechanism that the church world, or the religious world they knew, could bring this about. It is not of the will of man; it's not of man. There is no psychology; there are no rudiments of religion. There are no steps and principles, but by receiving Christ, with the Christ coming in to dwell within man, God produces or reproduces a people, who are His offsprings. Then we go to John chapter 3, where Nicodemus comes, filled with religion, a teacher of the Jews. And John presents Jesus as being so straightforward. You know, right there! By passing all of the rig-a-ma-rolls, as we would say, of trying to make Nicodemus understand what he was going through and what he needed, Jesus saw the urgency of the moment and simply said: *You know what you need? You have had religion, you have taught the thing, you know the principles, and you have seen me operate and because of your sincerity and desire for what you saw in me, you went back to the principles of your religion. You might have tried to offer more sacrifices and tried to do the things I'm doing. But you know what you need Nicodemus? You need to be born again.* Straightforward! And Nicodemus tried to understand it according to his natural level of understanding. He was an educated man like some of you young people are. He knew the Biology; he knew how people were born and he said: Now what are you talking about? Do I have to go back

to my mother's womb and be born? (John 3:4) But Jesus was talking at a supernatural level. It takes a supernatural word to reproduce supernatural things. And Jesus said: Truly, truly, I say to you... (there is no way around it) ...except a man is born again, he cannot see... (and in another section he said), ...he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:3) No power, no ability, no potential, lies in one who is not born again, to see the things of the kingdom or to enter into the things of the kingdom. So John was taking us to another supernatural level.

If you read the book of John from that standpoint, you will see always a straightforward presentation of the supernatural. The people who had followed Jesus into the wilderness - I think it was about five thousand or more of them - and they came because they had heard he had done a miracle, where he multiplied loaves and fishes and fed them. They came expecting him to minister at that level and he knew that. He felt if he had perpetuated that, they would be perceiving him at the wrong level. That wasn't what he came to do. He came to bring men into contact with the supernatural God, that they could walk as a supernatural people, in ways that they have not walked in terms of their normal patterns of religion. And he said to them, "*Listen, there is a bread of life. You came for natural bread, but I came to present the Bread of Life...*"

Sometimes when people don't understand the things of God, it hurts us and we wonder if we should break things down, or reduce things or dilute it a bit, that they may understand. But I don't think it does any good for a sick person if the medicine is diluted. No matter how strong it may be to their taste. And so Jesus had no time to dilute. In John chapter 6, he gave them the Word, the Bread of Life instead of natural bread, and they couldn't understand and they walked away. There are times we have tried to present to people the real, deep, wonderful things that God has made real to our hearts, and they looked at us as though they were baffled and they walked away. We might have wished that we could go after them and bring them back. Bring them back to

something they can better understand or that's more palatable to their digestion system. And that's the danger. When we confront it, we must handle it properly. Because I believe the moving of the Holy Ghost that God gave us a taste of in this place in 1948, is a pure thing; it is supernatural. None of these brethren who experienced that, could have said that somehow, they had some preconception of how it was going to happen. It was God's supernatural moving and as it has been from the beginning so it will always remain. God remains supreme and God does not have to condescend to man's puny level of understanding. He will give revelation where our natural mind cannot perceive. He doesn't have to dilute the truth to make us understand it.

And so the disciples felt - and no doubt Christ read their minds - what can we do to keep the crowd? Everybody is leaving us. It's like the church is getting empty, because the elders are talking too much about the deep things of the Move of the Spirit. It's time they talk a little bit more like those we see on TV, who seem to draw the crowd. Perhaps, the elders should bring in a little bit of the worldly methods, and conduct the meeting with more entertainment; get a drum set there and the guitarist there. Get the thing alive; you'll keep the crowd. The disciples must have felt this way when Jesus turned to them and gave them a surprising word of comfort: Will you too go away? (John 6:67) Peter answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the word of eternal life." (John 6:68)

The people who will remain with the Lord in sincerity are those who have gone beyond the attraction of human personalities, church entertainments, the elaborate church building or the comfort of the seats. They must be those who have contacted Jesus Christ himself. Those who have partaken, tasted, experienced the Bread of Life. This is what the moving of the Holy Spirit is all about. When you encounter such people, no matter what circumstances they confront, they will remain with the Lord. Because to whom else can they go to continue to feed and sustain their souls in the

manner that God has been doing in the moving of the Holy Spirit?

Brethren, we are out there on the foreign fields and we know, and I'm sure you know too, that the world of religion has changed a lot. Not for the better but for the worse. And when I talk about religion I make no apology for the Christian religion. As I have reflected upon the Christian religion, I realize that like any other religion, as long as it remains under man's perception and man's control, it goes the way of any other religion. If it is man-made, then it can be easily copied. We may feel we are privileged in the West because we are born in a Christian society. But in recent times my heart has been very grieved, because I see how easy it is for men to take the name of the Lord in vain. How easy it is for people to have a form of godliness, yet the very essence of godliness they deny and that's the so-called Christian religion today. I say this to my children: *"Yes you were born in a Christian home and you have watched us operate, you have been in the church day and night and it's easy to go through the fashion. It's easy to do the things you have seen and heard, but what will keep you, is you personally having an experience with the Lord."* Religion is a culture. In our so-called Christian culture, we can have many apparently religious people, but there's a difference between being religious and having the life that Jesus gives. There's a difference between religion and the transformation that the Holy Ghost brings. Bro. Holt used to say, (it's in his book), that the Spirit of God is not in reformation. We have a whole history of reformations in Christian religious history, but what God has come to do in us, as Bro. Holt said, is to transform us. God is not improving or rehabilitating man's old nature. God has crucified our old nature and has transformed us into new creatures. Jesus said you don't put new wine in old bottles.

But what impressed me this morning is the account we read in John chapter five. Here was this situation there. It was a very sacred thing to the Jews, very religions; it was a place called Bethesda. But that pool meant a lot to the people. And there were five porches there,

which means they had properly organized the thing. Well structured and everything so that it can function and fulfill its purpose then. And an angel would come at a certain time, into the pool and stir up the water, and whoever stepped in first after the stirring, that person would be made well. So you can imagine, that was an important religious place. It must have been something that was going on for several generations and people who were sick would find a place there in one of these porches waiting for the water to be stirred. It would be a lot of sanctity and sacredness and piety in everything going on there. Very, very religions place. And that was it, that's what they grew up in and it seemed to be working to that extent. And there was this man; for thirty-eight years he had an infirmity. As to how many years he had stayed there, we are not too clear about it, whether it was thirty-eight years or whether it was part of those thirty-eight years of his illness, but however, he was there for quite some time and that's what was expected of him. If you are not well and you are looking for a supernatural healing, you go to Bethesda, you get a place on the porch, and you wait. That's the way to do it, that's the way to go about it. That was the religious tradition and so he did it. But notice that Jesus Christ came standing right by this man. And he's asking this man: Will you be healed? "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6) And even in the presence of the Son of God this man's eyes, his mindset, his mentality, is still focused on that ritualism. Jesus is there before him, but he still would like to bring Jesus down to operate at the level of the religious tradition he had known. He sees Jesus, not as the Great Physician, but as a man to help him get into the pool where he thinks his healing is. The Son of God stood right next to him, yet he won't reach out and receive from the Lord. That's what religion can do. It shapes our mindset and blinds us to what God is doing or wants to do in our lives. Thus, even when God is revealing Himself to us, and wanting to minister to the thirsting of our souls, we would still want to interpret what God is doing down to the level of what the religion

once shaped our minds to think. The present moving of the Spirit presents a similar challenge. Religious traditions can blind men's eyes to the glory which the Holy Spirit is revealing. The Christian religion has fallen into a lot of vain tradition, as well as modern worldliness. To many, these things are the norms and expectations. Everybody seems to be doing it. And that makes the wonderful teachings being unfolded by the ministries in this Move of God seem unusual. I have been reading Bro. Holt's book, *Messages to the Church*. Our Brother has left the earth, but the things he speaks are so clear and powerful. Yet we can miss the present meaningfulness of these teachings if we have allowed our mindset to be shaped by some form of tradition or religion, which we have made out of this Move. We can miss the reality of the present moving of the Spirit in our lives, because we become preoccupied with the history and events of the Move of God in 1948. Rather than seeing and experiencing what the Holy Spirit wants to do now, we are waiting for another 'move' similar to what took place in 1948. God is still moving! But if we fall back on the history and we fall back on the religion of the thing, chances are we will begin to perceive that we must now wait for another stirring of the pool.

Perhaps we are at that point in the history of the church when the remnant needs to pray for God to open their eyes to see that He is still in the Church and He is still in control. Hallelujah! Let us follow the moving of the Holy Ghost. Let us not be afraid to let go, let go of the forms, let go of the rituals, let go of the religion and trust the Spirit of God to make us what God wants us to be. Hallelujah! Let us recognize the ongoing Move of the Spirit in our lives and yield to Him. Let us not sit down in lameness waiting for another stirring of the pool, looking for someone to help us get into the pool of some sort of religious ritual, while our Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Deliverer is standing right in our midst to lift us up in deliverance, victory, and life.

Forgiveness: Difficult But Necessary

By Harvey Zingle

Introduction

I'm going to share some thoughts about forgiveness, which I have learned from my having been a counsellor for many years. However, before I begin to share some of the lessons I have learned from my experience, let me point out that the principle of being a forgiving person is at the very heart of what Jesus taught us. We are going to read Matt 18: 23-35, but before we do let me remind you this story-lesson is given a very important emphasis by Jesus as he calls it a "kingdom" parable when he says, "The kingdom of God is like this." He doesn't intend this to be just a neat idea for a sermon. Rather he is saying it has to do with the **truth of the Kingdom**. He's saying it has to do with how God rules, how He means for our lives to function, how we can align our lives with His intended order and how we can experience His joy in our lives if we live by His Kingdom Principles. Furthermore, as if to underline the importance of the parable, he has a warning at the end of it: "This is how my Heavenly Father will treat you."

Let's read Matt 18: 23-35 (NKJ). *"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But the servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him*

into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So my heavenly father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Before commenting further on this passage let's put the story in perspective. Jesus tells the story just after Peter asks the question "Lord, should I forgive people seven times?" (v 21). Peter thought he was being quite a hero with this offer as seven was well past what was thought of as appropriate at that time. The religious leaders of that era proposed that even God didn't forgive anyone more than three times. This had been inferred from the teaching of Amos (see Amos 1 & 2). Therefore, when Peter offers to forgive seven times he really believes he is being generous. However, he and those that were with him were no doubt shocked when Jesus answered, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matt 18:22). These men were not idiots. They obviously understood that Jesus wasn't saying you should forgive 490 times. Rather, they got the message that Jesus intended. He mean's for them and for us to think of forgiving as an ongoing, continual process. They were clearly given the same message that Paul gives us when, in writing about love in 1 Cor 13:5 he says, "love doesn't keep score."

When we came to Christ, our debts that were greater than we could ever pay were forgiven. His forgiveness is complete and has no conditions attached to it. Furthermore, having been forgiven, we are expected to

live in the same forgiving attitude towards others.

My experience as a counsellor has led me to the conclusion that nearly every conflict in human relationships is due to people's unwillingness to forgive others. Let's remember that Jesus is still giving us the same message today that He did to His disciples 2000 years ago. The Kingdom of heaven is like this. If we want to be a "kingdom people" we cannot escape our responsibility to be a forgiving people. Jesus is not talking about what will be in heaven someday. He has come to bring heaven's rule into our hearts here and now; not just forgiving when it is easy but to forgive in the same unconditional way that our Heavenly Father has forgiven us.

Becoming a Forgiving Person

As I said earlier, I have come to realize the importance of forgiveness over the years, both in my professional life as a counsellor and in my personal life. As a very imperfect human being, I find challenges everyday to practice forgiveness. While I have counselled for many years, it has been in the last ten or so years that the importance of forgiveness for healthy and personal growth has really impressed me. If I can forgive, I can set aside the weight of resentment and be freed to direct my energies toward the future. Not only is this an important lesson for me, it is important that those I counsel are also able to learn this lesson.

I am not writing this brief article as a quick fix, promising something I can't deliver. I am not suggesting that upon completion of reading this article that you will find it easy to forgive. Rather I am quite aware that forgiveness usually requires fundamental changes in our lives. Nevertheless I am also hoping to convince you that in the long run becoming a forgiving person can make your future much healthier and happier.

In our society we often hear the phrase "I don't get mad, I get even." Paul reminds us that this is not how it

should be when he writes, “ Never take revenge, my friends, but instead let God’s anger do it, for the scripture says, ‘I will take revenge, I will pay back, says the Lord.’” (Rom 12:19, Good News) I am suggesting that there are choices other than blame and guilt. A person who develops an attitude of forgiveness is less likely to take offense at small wrongs and is also more likely to survive major or even catastrophic hurts; even hurts like psychological, physical or sexual abuse.

Forgiveness is not something you have to do. It’s an option. However, in my opinion, especially if we really desire to be a “kingdom people,” it is always to one’s advantage to forgive. I sincerely hope that after reading this article that you will gain some understandings that will make it easier for you to become a forgiving person. Forgiveness is a process that takes time. Some parts of the process may be painful. You are the only one who can make the choice to begin that process. The payoff is healing and a brighter future.

Sometimes what offends us is minor; other offenses are tremendously hurtful. If a behavior is an isolated event it is likely a minor hurt. Let’s take an example of a father in a broken marriage situation who promises to take his son out to a hockey game on his visitation evening. The son excitedly anticipates the important event of “seeing the game” but the father doesn’t show up. If this happens just once we might observe a boy with only a minor hurt. Nonetheless the father has, by this act, sent several messages. Firstly, he has indicated that inconveniencing his son is not important. Secondly, he has told him that he is not worthy of his attention and time. Thirdly, he has violated his trust. If this happens just once this may be trivial, but if it happens frequently it can be devastating. If it happens once it is simply an act; if it happens frequently it communicates an attitude of “you’re not important” and his behavior is a betrayal and he injures his child.

Obviously not all clients who come to counselling have unresolved issues with parents or other adults who were involved in their upbringing. We may have been

betrayed or offended by friends, colleagues, siblings, spouses or others. All of these hurts, if held on to for a long time, can have serious implications for our mental health and well-being. However, I have found that the betrayals we carry with us from our childhood are often the most difficult to deal with. This is especially true if the offender was a parent. Parents often offend their children without even being conscious of what they are doing. They may use shame as a means of control. Instead of saying to the child “what you did is improper or wrong” they send a message that says that “you’re a bad person...I’m ashamed of you,...you should be ashamed of yourself.” Or, when children are older some version of “How can you treat me like that after all I’ve done for you?”

As a counsellor I have had numerous clients who remembered such painful childhood experiences. Nothing they ever did was good enough. Nothing seemed to get a response of a warm smile or a hug of approval. Forgiving someone who has humiliated us and put us down is not easy. Furthermore, we really find it difficult to confront and deal with offenses by parents because we have been brought up with the idea of honoring our parents.

I have worked with many clients who have insisted to themselves that they must honor and forgive their parents before they have even fully considered their parents’ short comings and failures. Such forgiveness feels phony and is phony. This is not really forgiveness at all and it is certainly not honoring one’s parents. Real forgiveness can only occur after people admit their hurt, permit themselves to feel and express anger and then gather appropriate information about their parents and the event surrounding the hurtful experience. Regardless of how hard it is to forgive one’s parents, an essential part of growing up is to do just that.

Stages of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a process. Here are the steps that help us understand that forgiveness is not a simple event. Rather, it is a process involving three stages that precede forgiveness. These are the hurt stage, the anger

stage and the information-seeking stage.

Firstly, some event occurs that offends us. Then hurt ensues the offensive event. Anger follows and we have a tendency to stay at the anger phase and focus on revenge, “getting even” in some way, or hurting the one who hurt us. Unfortunately we cannot move to a forgiveness stage unless we get involved in the gathering-information stage. One can only become a forgiving person if one takes this essential step. The information gathering stage involves:

- reframing, that is, looking at the situation in different ways such as, noting the positive characteristics of the individual.

- letting go of the desire to retaliate.

- finally, letting go to the point where we can honestly wish the offender well.

Forgiveness is Not

Perhaps before discussing what forgiveness is, it is helpful for us to consider what forgiveness is not. Forgiveness is not forgetting, condoning, absolving or tolerating. It is not an instant decision.

Forgetting - we can’t erase past painful experiences from memory.

Condoning - we are not saying what was done to us is acceptable- it did hurt- it did affect our life.

Absolution – we do not absolve people of responsibility for their hurtful actions. They are responsible for what they did.

Toleration - we do not swallow our feelings and play the martyr or say “it doesn’t matter” when it does.

An instant decision – it cannot be forced on us.

Forgiveness is Freeing Yourself

In most relationships we operate according to a principle of equilibrium. When a person feels that the other person is gaining power over him, he does or says something that he feels will restore the equilibrium. Power struggles are always present in our relationships. When someone has offended us deeply we have been put in the “down or no win” position. Our natural impulses are to do what ever it takes to put us into the “up or win” position. We feel like hurting the other person, humiliating the other person, wishing the other person harm, etc.

Obviously, all of these behaviors serve only to escalate the power struggle and do nothing to heal the hurt. Forgiveness means we must renounce revenge of any kind. “Repay no one evil for evil.” (Rom 12:17, NKJ).

In summary forgiveness: is something you do for yourself, not the offender. It is a growth process in which forgiveness comes about naturally as a result of intentionally confronting painful past experiences and healing old wounds. It entails working through the unfinished business, letting go of the pain, and moving on.

Forgiveness is **within our control**; it is an intentional choice on our part in which we take ownership of our thoughts and feelings. The words of Jesus, “but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt 5:39), have been terribly misunderstood. What Jesus was saying is that when someone is aggressive toward you, you have the option of being aggressive back or behaving differently. While most people take these words to mean they should accept abuse or let someone have power over them, I see this as just the opposite. I believe this admonition from Jesus is encouraging us to take control of our own behavior. If I hit you, I am defining you as my enemy. If you hit me back, you are doing likewise. You are letting me define you in relation to me. You are giving me the power to behave aggressively. However, if you “turn the other cheek” you are in fact saying that I’m not your enemy. Therefore, in this way you are taking control of your own behavior. You are choosing to define who you are, rather than letting me do so. In this way you are taking control of yourself, not me taking control of you. This results in feelings of wellness, freedom and acceptance.

Forgiveness **enables us to develop healthy self-esteem**. Our identity is no longer built around something that happened to us in the past – we see the negative experience as part of our past, not our identity. For example, rather than seeing our self as an “abuse victim” we may view our self as an attractive, caring, competent person who happened to have been abused in the past. By not

allowing the past to direct the future we no longer need to harbor the grudges, resentments, hatreds and self-pity.

Forgiveness frees us from hurting and hating. It allows us to let go of the intense emotional attachments to incidents from our past. We do not forget what happened but we no longer feel intensely angry, bitter, resentful, frightened or damaged. Forgiveness involves accepting that nothing that is done to punish the “offender” will heal us. It is choosing to admit we have done enough hurting and hating and that we do not want those things anymore. This allows us to move on, to rediscover strengths we always had and to free us to understand and accept other people and ourselves. That is, we are able to put to better use the time and energy once consumed by holding grudges, harboring resentments, and nursing unhealed wounds.

Clearly, revengeful behavior is a way of regaining our sense of power. When you hurt me you have gained power over me. Being put down not only hurts it is also intolerable for us. We deserve equality or equilibrium in our relationship. However, as long as we pursue revenge we will not have equality or healing. Revenge is focused on the past, while forgiveness is focused on the future. It is focused on change rather than blame.

How Do We Forgive?

I hope that by this point you have been convinced of the benefits of forgiveness to one’s mental well-being. Nevertheless while you may agree with this concept you may still focus on how difficult it is to forgive someone who has wronged you and shows absolutely no remorse for doing so.

Is it easy to forgive? No, not usually. However, I am not talking about what is easy. I am talking about what is likely to work and what is clearly beneficial for you and furthermore it is what your Heavenly Father desires for you.

One way to start the process, which indeed may take a long time, is to recall some of the positive characteristics of the person who wronged you. There may not be many, but if it is a spouse or some other significant person in your life

you should be able to think of some positive characteristics. Focus on these as well as the negatives. By shifting your attention to previous events that are both positive and negative you begin to realize that you have the **freedom to make choices**. You may have no control over what the other person did or said to you but you do have control over what you pay attention to. Attending to new or previously ignored information will result in changes in your view of things. It will result in moving you slowly in the direction of becoming a forgiving person.

Appendix A, (found at the end of this article), should be of help in working through the process of forgiveness, which is crucially essential to getting to where forgiveness can be achieved. Or for that matter, if you are struggling with some hurt or grudge you can go through each of these items thoughtfully and prayerfully and write down your responses. When you come to the place (which may take days or even months) of really being able to let go and forgive you can destroy your notes and you will be free. The pain, bitterness and hurting will stop. Complete healing can now occur.

Is Reconciliation Necessary?

The simple answer is no. There are obvious examples where one may choose not to reconcile. A wife is physically abused. A child is sexually abused. Letting go of your resentment and getting on with your life will bring you peace and healing. But to return to the situation where you can be abused again is not only unwise, it is stupid. For example, a man who has physically abused his wife and promises he will not do it again will likely reoffend unless God intervenes miraculously or if he takes his “anger” or “control” problem seriously and gets professional help. Without adequate therapy this type of person will likely remain the same. Count on it.

A related question is, “Is an apology necessary” for me to let go of hurts. Again the answer is no. An apology clearly makes forgiveness easier. However, as the apology comes from the person who wronged you, you may never receive an

apology. Nevertheless you can achieve freedom from the hurts and pains by forgiving the person who mistreated you. Sheila Cassidy, a victim of Chilean torture wrote, “I know what it was like to be powerless to forgive...I can only say: however much we have been wronged, however justified our hatred, if we cherish it, it will poison us. It is in forgiving our enemies that we are healed.” The purpose of this article is to help you take charge of your own behavior and attitudes and to get on with your life.

Conclusion

Many people believe that to change their behavior toward someone they must change their attitudes and feelings about the other person. Obviously, if we change how we feel about someone our behavior towards them will change. However, the opposite can also be true. If we change our behavior, our feelings toward them will likely change in accordance with our behavior. If we do something loving toward an individual, we are more likely to **feel** loving toward them than we would if we did something hateful. Jesus said **pray** for them which despitefully use you (Matt 5:44). You may not **feel** like praying but you can choose to pray. Deciding to change feelings is easy enough, but deciding to do so does not necessarily result in changed feelings. It is, on the other hand, easier to change our behaviors- what we do and say. That is something we have control over and can do. This is our **choice**. Insight follows healing and growth, rather than the other way around.

Becoming a forgiving person doesn't just happen. **It is a choice**. The choice is one that we make deliberately. The choice we make about how we act will result in how we feel about ourselves and will also result in healing and growth. If the person who has wronged us is to be forgiven, released, accepted and understood it must be we who do it. God isn't going to force us to do it. It's our choice. The payoff, as I have already said, is **healing and growth**. Surely that is what we desire. When you forgive someone for hurting you, you perform spiritual surgery inside your soul.

There are many places in the Bible

that direct us to be forgiving to others. “Be kind to each other, be compassionate. Be as ready to **forgive** others as God for Christ's sake has **forgiven** you.” (Eph 4:32, Phillips). “And **forgive** us our debts, As we **forgive** our debtors” (Matt 6:12, NKJ). “Bearing with one another, if any one has a complaint against another, even as Christ **forgave** you, **so you must also do.**” (Col 3:13). Forgiveness is central to the very essence of God. If we desire to be a “kingdom” people we must allow His nature to become part of us. And let's always remember that we are all people who are constantly in need of God's mercy and we have indeed received God's mercy. The important message I hope we all get from this article is that we let the fact that He forgave us shape the way we treat others. As difficult as it might be, we must become a forgiving people. **FORGIVENESS IS DIFFICULT: BUT NECESSARY.**

Appendix A

LEARNING TO FORGIVE: HEALING THE HURT

1. RECOGNIZE THE OFFENSIVE EVENT

- how are you using denial
- are you burying your thoughts & feelings
- are you playing down the impact or importance of painful past events

2. WHO DO YOU NEED TO FORGIVE

- what did they say or do that hurt or injured you

- describe what happened
- what was painful or unfair
- how are you blaming yourself

3. IDENTIFY THE EMOTIONS YOU ARE EXPERIENCING

- how did you react to the injuries & injustices you experienced
- what did you come to believe about yourself
- what are the negative behaviors you engage in because you were hurt

List some of the feeling you have about what happened.

- I am afraid to explore this because
- I am angry that
- I feel guilty about ...
- I feel ashamed & humiliated by ...
- I would not have been hurt if ...

4. COMMUNICATE THE HURT & ANGER

- getting it out- releasing its grip on you

-“If that person were here & I could say what I wanted to say to this person (s), I would tell them

5. MOVING FORWARD: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- what is holding you back from letting go
- how are you keeping the pain alive

Look at your present circumstances- list both the positive and negative aspects of your life today - including your excuses for everything/anything that is wrong with you & your life. Describe the problems you may be experiencing & the insight, resources & emotional support you have right now.

6. FORGIVING

Now you are ready to put the past into perspective (without forgetting it) and let go of the pain. At this point you release the other person from your own expectations thereby freeing yourself from the past emotional baggage.

Do something symbolic to represent your willingness to forgive – for example, write down the anger, hurt, bitterness you have and are still experiencing. When you are really willing to let go, have a small ceremony with a trusted friend and burn the letter.

7. PROTECT YOURSELF BY TAKING APPROPRIATE STEPS

If you are in a situation where you could be reinjured, list what you can do to protect yourself, both now & in the future (For example, changing the way the “Guilt Game” is played in your family).

8. DECIDE WHETHER RECONCILIATION IS BEST FOR YOU

- Why do you want the reconciliation? Does it make sense (eg. the offender is a family member you cannot avoid contact with)

- If you approach the other person, how do you think they will respond?

- Can you accept the worst response? How will you respond?

- How can you check to see if the other person (s) are open to working through their part of the reconciliation process?

DATES OF IMPORTANCE

- Indiana Young People's Meeting Dec. 27-31, 2005
- North Battleford New Year's Youth Retreat Dec. 29, 2005 - Jan. 2, 2006
- Big Spring, Texas Jan. 27-29, 2006
- North Carolina Winter Camp Feb. 24-26, 2006
- Feast North Battleford April 13-16, 2006
- Illinois Gathering (King's House) April 28-30, 2006
- Edmonton Young Peoples May 20-22, 2006
- Camp North Battleford July 2-9, 2006
- Pinelow Summer Family Camp Aug. 7 - 13, 2006
- Hidden Acres Sept. 1-4, 2006
- Park Valley Sept. 1-4, 2006
- Winkler Sept. 1-4, 2006
- Minden Meetings Sept. 22-24, 2006
- Pinelow Family Camp Nov. 9-12, 2006

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KINGDOM-SONSHIP GATHERING

"Unto HIM shall the gathering of the people be."

JANUARY 27-28-29
Big Spring, Texas

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SPRING TABERNACLE
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 Brethren from Sharon Schools in North Battleford will be present to minister the Kingdom Word.

It's important to let us know you're coming. Normally, the saints gather from many locations, including new friends of "kindred" spirit from near and far. Although never huge in size, the gathering is rich in anointing, a special time of spiritual ministry and fellowship.

Services: Opening service is Friday evening and final service is Sunday evening, also 10 am Saturday and Sunday.
 January 27-28-29, 2006.

Location: Big Spring in west Texas. Motel accommodations at reasonable rates are available. Those flying should book to Midland/Odessa, if possible, about 40 miles from Big Spring. Dallas is almost 4 hours away.

Contact-Reservations-Full Details:
TERRY MILLER - Ph. 204-466-2673
Email: sharonbroadcast@yahoo.com
 or
JERRY KOLTES - Ph. 940-391-1448

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The Sharon Star is a monthly paper, published and mailed out on the free-will offering plan, as a medium of information for all who are interested in the unfolding revelation of the Word of God.

Published by Sharon Children's Homes and Schools, Box 878, North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada, S9A 2Z3.

Sharon Star on line www.thesharonstar.org
 Office (306) 445-2733.

Publications Mail Agreement 40012206