

Forgiving Our Worst Enemies



Tim Dilena April 17, 2021

C.S. Lewis wrote these words: "Forgiveness is a lovely idea until you have to forgive someone." Nothing could be truer, right?

Corrie ten Boom has one of the most amazing stories about forgiveness. Her book *The Hiding Place* is about how her family housed Jews running from the Nazis in Amsterdam. The Nazis eventually caught up with them and put her whole family in the concentration camps. Every one of them died, except Corrie. She went on for 30 more years to preach the gospel.

One day, Corrie said, she was preaching in Munich, Germany decades after the days of the concentration camp. At the church where she was preaching, she saw a familiar face. It was a guard who had routinely mocked her and put her in a shower nearly every day, pretending that he was going to exterminate her, and who was responsible for her sister Betsie's death. He was sitting there in front of her.

Now, suddenly, forgiveness is not so lovely of an idea, is it?

She recognized the guard, but he didn't recognize her. After the service, the ex-guard came up and said, "Fraulein, I heard you mention Ravensbrück. I was a guard there. But since those days, I've become a Christian. I know that God forgives me, but would you forgive me?"

She said, "I stood there paralyzed. This man was a monster. He'd killed my family, and he'd killed my sister." She said that as she sat there, this was her prayer: "Forgive me, Father, for the inability to forgive." Then she said that the power of the Holy Spirit surged through her. She felt her hand go out, clasp his and heard herself say to this man, "You are forgiven."

Later, she said, "That day, not only was the man set free, but I was set free."

When you forgive, you're not changing the past, but you are changing your own future. This is what the gospel is all about. That's the glory of what we believe; the way Christianity conquers its enemies is by forgiving its enemies.

"Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:11-13, ESV).

After pastoring an inner-city congregation in Detroit for thirty years, Pastor Tim served at Brooklyn Tabernacle in NYC for five years and pastored in Lafayette, Louisiana, for five years. He became Senior Pastor of Times Square Church in May of 2020.

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